West of Eden:

Planning Community Gardens for Pittsfield's West Side



Green Team:

Nicholas Brandfon Briana Halpin Tisha Joseph

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I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In the spring of 2003, the Department of Community Development (DCD) of the city of Pittsfield, Massachusetts, launched an initiative to revitalize its West Side neighborhood. With a high proportion of renters and 20% of its residents below the poverty line, this section of town is the city's poorest and most transient neighborhood. The DCD's West Side Initiative aims to address issues of economic and social depression in the West Side through beautification projects, the encouragement of home ownership and investment in neighborhood properties, and the cultivation of community pride and citizen participation.

One of the Initiative's major goals is the reclamation of vacant lots, which litter the West Side and contribute to blight, crime, and the city-wide stigma attached to the neighborhood. The block in the West Side with the highest number of vacant lots was designated the "First Project Area." This area—bounded by Linden Street to the north, Robbins Avenue to the east, Bradford Street to the south, and Dewey Street to the west has become the focus of the DCD's initial efforts. Through surveying neighborhood leaders in the West Side, a consultant hired by the DCD suggested that community gardens might serve as a productive use of vacant lots. ¹ In addition to improving the appearance of decaying urban neighborhoods, city gardens have been linked to reduced crime rates, enhanced opportunities for socialization between residents, healthier diets and increased exercise among typically sedentary populations.

This semester, our project team (The Green Team) worked with the DCD to research the feasibility of garden development in Pittsfield's West Side. In collaboration with Robert Cornwell, Neighborhood Development Administrator of the DCD, we defined two major objectives for our team: (1) to create a template for community garden development in Pittsfield; and (2) to evaluate each of the vacant lots in the First Project Area for their suitability as garden sites.

The first of these efforts has yielded a "how-to" guide for garden development in Pittsfield that we have printed and distributed to residents and community leaders. Our guide leads prospective garden organizers through the complex, often circuitous process

¹ Ryan, John J. "Neighborhood Revitalization Action Plan: City of Pittsfield, MA West Side Neighborhood." January 2003. p. 6.

of planning a community garden. Special attention is paid to the technical and legalistic dimensions of garden planning: achieving compliance with the city Zoning Ordinance and the state Wetland and Rivers Protection Act; ensuring high soil quality on a given garden site; identifying sources of funding and materials. Though we have not charted every inch of the process, we anticipate that our suggestions will help to expedite the next attempt to create community gardens in Pittsfield.

In our second task, we assessed fourteen vacant lots within the First Project Area for their suitability as garden sites. After measuring the amount of sunlight received by each lot, we narrowed our pool of consideration to five sites, which we then evaluated based on six criteria: Existing Fencing, Visibility, Surroundings, Debris Meter, Flatness, and Size. Having ranked each site according to these criteria, we recommended that certain of the five be developed as community gardens depending on the budget and priorities of garden planners.

While our client for this project, Robert Cornwell, was indeed a member of the city government, it is not primarily at the city government that our recommendations are directed. It is the earnest hope of Cornwell and our team that a small group of West Side residents—an existing community group or one created expressly for this purpose—will take advantage of our work and begin, in the same spirit of grassroots organization that has started gardens in other Massachusetts cities, begin the greening of the West Side!

II. PROJECT BACKGROUND

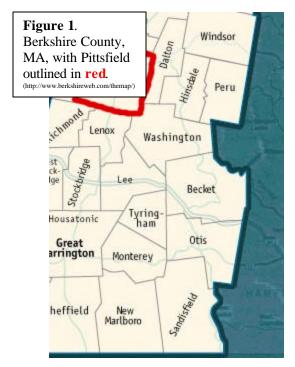
THE CITY OF PITTSFIELD

Pittsfield, incorporated as a city in 1890, is the largest in Berkshire County. Settled by Europeans in 1743, it was quickly industrialized in the wake of the Revolutionary War.² Several wool mills of lasting importance began operations in the mid-nineteenth century around the same time that the first train pulled into Pittsfield, connecting it to Boston, Worcester, and Albany.³ The second half of the nineteenth century marked the beginning of rapid growth in Pittsfield that would continue to

² "History Outline for City of Pittsfield." history.html. Visited 2 November 2003.

³ Wilson, George F. History of Pittsfield, Massachusetts. City of Pittsfield, 1957.

accelerate through the first part of the twentieth, further spurred on by the opening of a General Electric plant in the city in 1903.⁴



Until the 1970s, General Electric alone was the economic engine of Pittsfield. The company employed such a high proportion of the city's residents at high wages that it was popularly known as "Generous Electric." Nat Karns, Executive Director of the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission, remembers that in 1970, all available housing was occupied in Pittsfield—much of it by GE employees. Within a few years, however, GE's generosity began to constrict: reductions in its manufacturing operations resulted in the loss of nearly 14,000 jobs in the 1970s and 1980s. Pittsfield has failed to develop a post-industrial economy in the wake

of GE layoffs, and the young working population has largely drained from the city.

Relative to the Pittsfield of 1970, the City is one in need of rejuvenation. As of the 2000 census it had a population of 45,793, a six percent decrease from 1990. Over the same time period the percent of people below the poverty line, the median value of owner occupied housing, single parent households, and households with no workers increased (see Table 1). While there are sections of Pittsfield with stable middle-class and wealthy neighborhoods, the city has a substantial number of poor neighborhoods, high crime rates, a declining downtown and a strained municipal budget unable to adequately meet the needs of Pittsfield residents and maintain the city's physical infrastructure.

Through the efforts of the DCD and private investors, the process of rejuvenation is beginning. Millions of dollars in capital investment in Main Street and the revitalization of Colonial Theater—which Hillary Clinton described as a "national

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⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Art, Henry. Environmental Studies 302 class, 13 November 2003.

⁶ Karns, Nat. Personal Communication, 18 November 2003.

⁷ Ibid.

treasure"—are steps toward a renewed commercial base. While \$10 million in deficit several years ago, the city presently has \$1-2 million in excess. The city is also pursuing a systematic program of demolition and rehabilitation, which has reduced the number of vacant buildings from 100 four years ago to approximately 40 now.⁸

Table 1: City of Pittsfield ⁹	1990	2000	% Change
Population	48,622	45,793	-6%
Percent Owner Occupied	60%	61%	2%
Median Household Income	\$29,987	\$35,655	19%
% Persons Below Poverty Level	10%	11%	8%
Median Gross Rent	461	503	9%
Percent Paying 35+% of Income for Rent	32%	29%	-10%
Median Housing Value of Owner Occupied Housing	\$110,700	\$100,800	-9%
Racial Composition: Percent White Only	95%	93%	-3%
Percent of Families w/children: Single Parent	26%	41%	58%
Percent Moved to Pittsfield in last 5 years	17%	16%	-7%
Percent Families with no workers in Household	17%	18%	5%

THE WEST SIDE NEIGHBORHOOD

Among the most significant problems facing Pittsfield is a tax title crisis that has led to \$3 million in lost tax revenue. There are a large number of abandoned properties—both buildings and lots—throughout the city whose owners have failed to pay taxes. The city has claimed these, bringing them into the status of "tax titles." Currently, the tax title properties possessed by the city of Pittsfield account for a loss of approximately \$3 million in tax revenues. The city government is actively addressing this issue. The new city solicitor is aggressively pursuing tax title delinquencies, and has

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⁸ Cornwell, Robert. Personal Communication, 5 December 2003.

⁹ Ryan, John J. "Neighborhood Revitalization Action Plan: City of Pittsfield, MA West Side Neighborhood." January 2003, p. 6.

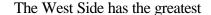
¹⁰ Gilmore, Patience. Secretary to Mayor Hathaway. Personal Communication, 31 October 2003.

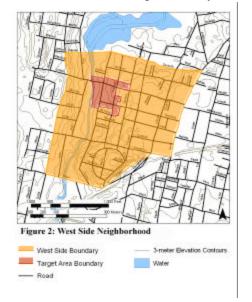
to date collected \$300,000 in taxes. Additionally, the city has decided to focus its efforts in areas where the problem is concentrated. A recent analysis determined the greatest number of vacant lots and building to be in Pittsfield's "West Side neighborhood" — an area whose boundaries are continuously contested but can be roughly defined as the area between North Street, West Street, Turner Avenue and Onota Street (see Figure 2).

The West Side has been a residential neighborhood for approximately 150 years and is one of Pittsfield's oldest neighborhoods. ¹² By 1876 it had been settled in a grid pattern of straight hilly streets, closely spaced houses and became home to Italian, Irish and Jewish immigrants. Before the advent of the convenience store and supermarket, the West Side was populated by small storefronts such as meat markets, bakeries, and delicatessens. Since then the West Side has grown in cultural, economic and social diversity, but has been simultaneously carded as the poorest area in Pittsfield and is the victim of serious urban blight and decay. ¹³

Generally speaking, the West Side now has the oldest housing in the city and

much of it is in poor condition. Existing housing is a combination of single family and multifamily homes and throughout the West Side there is very little landscaping, even on properties that are occupied. A number of occupied homes appear to be in a state of disrepair. This is largely explained by a second statistic: the West Side holds a higher percentage of rental housing and absentee landlords than the rest of the city. ¹⁴ Finally, the West Side is blighted with empty lots, many of which are covered in trash and debris.





Map by Vivian Schoung, 2003. Modified by Green Team, 2003.

¹¹ Cornwell, Robert. Personal communication, 30 October 2003.

¹² Sukeinnik, Greg. "For many, West Side's the best." *The Berkshire Eagle*. 31 August 31 1997.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

number of low income and minority families in Pittsfield. ¹⁵ Of the sections of Pittsfield, it also "has a reputation of being less safe and generally less desirable as a place to live." While there has been a 40 percent increase in median income in the neighborhood between 1990 and 2000, there has also been an increase in the number of people below the poverty line—and median gross rent and median income in the West Side remain significantly behind the rest of Pittsfield. Population and median value of owner occupied housing have both experienced significant decreases during the same time period (see Table 2).

Table 2: West Side Neighborhood ¹⁷	1990	2000	% Change
Population	4,130	3,340	-19%
Percent Owner Occupied	33%	34%	5%
Median Household Income	\$17,140	\$24,080	40%
% Persons Below Poverty Level	19%	21%	7%
Median Gross Rent	\$433	\$478	10%
Percent Paying 35+% of Income for Rent	40%	29%	-27%
Median Value of Owner Occupied Housing	\$81,200	\$66,000	-19%
Racial Composition: Percent White Only	83%	78%	-7%
Percent of Families w/children: Single Parent	51%	60%	18%
Percent Moved to Pittsfield in last 5 years	20%	17%	-16%
Percent Families with No workers in Household	28%	22%	-23%

The West Side Initiative

These issues have recently alerted the city government to the West Side's need of a focused revitalization effort. High percentages of rental apartments and absentee landlords as well as high levels of poverty indicate that many residents lack the incentive and potential to take the steps necessary to improve their community and hold their

15 Cornwell, Robert. Personal Communication, 30 October 2003.
16 Ryan, p. 4.
17 Ryan, p. 5.

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landlords accountable, and government officials have seen intervention as the most likely impetus for change.¹⁸

Thus at the prompting of Mayor Sarah Hathaway, the City of Pittsfield launched, in the spring of 2003, its West Side Initiative. The West Side Initiative aims to plan and guide the revitalization of Pittsfield's West Side neighborhood through a series of strategic projects and long-term development schemes. 19 Its main goals have been broadly stated as the improvement of (1) physical conditions, (2) social conditions, and (3) economic development in the West Side. More specifically, the Initiative seeks to encourage investment in residential property through the reclamation and re-use of vacant and/or abandoned properties, renovation or demolition of houses to create attractive and affordable housing lots, improvement of the code of enforcement and the creation of an environment that fosters home ownership. It involves a wide cross-section of West Side stakeholders and is hoped to serve as a model of urban rejuvenation that can be applied to other decaying parts of Pittsfield, echoing the words of Councilor at Large Representative Matthew Kerwood "Pride in one's city begins with pride in one's neighborhood."²⁰

The action trajectory of the West Side Initiative will largely model itself on the recommendations made by consultant John Ryan in his 2003 report—among them, to develop youth recreation and community policing activities, create affordable housing, and bolster commercial initiatives in the West Side.²¹ Mark Amuso, Director of the Pittsfield Department of Community Development (DCD), has drafted a Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy Area Plan that incorporates and expands the work done by Ryan. At the time of our research, Amuso's report was in a process of review and thus not yet available to the public. When asked for a description of the report's content, Robert Cornwell offered one example of the DCD's particular revitalization goals: to create opportunities for self-employment in the West Side, and specifically to facilitate the development of three businesses in the first year of the Initiative.²² Funding for the

¹⁸ Gilmore, Patience. Personal Communication, 31 October 2003.

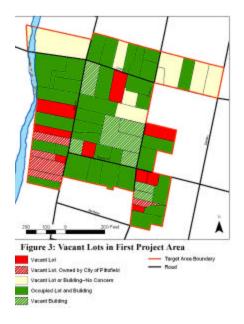
¹⁹ Bahlman, D.R. "West Side plan: rebirth or 'tomorrow's slums?" *The Berkshire Eagle*, p A1. 29 May 2003. ²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Rvan, John. p. 2-3.

²² Robert Cornwell. Personal Communication, 13 November 2003.

Initiative will come primarily from the public and private sectors, with each individual project benefiting from a unique combination of funding sources.²³

The body entrusted with the implementation of the West Side Initiative is the West Side Initiative Steering Committee. Comprised of twenty-one members, including four Neighborhood Representatives, the city mayor, two city councilors, Robert Cornwell of the DCD, and delegates from numerous local churches and non-profit organizations, this group meets once monthly to direct the course of revitalization in the West Side. In addition to the Steering Committee, several sub-committees—(1) Vacant Lots, Vacant Buildings, and Housing; (2) Beautification, Safety, Infrastructure; (3) Community Center / Youth Organizations; (4) Activities / Events; (5) Economic Development; and (6) Finance—have been formed to preside over particular dimensions of revitalization. Membership to the various committees occurred mainly through a process of self-nomination. While many of the individuals involved with the Initiative committees live and/or work in Pittsfield, we found that relatively few Steering and Sub-Committee members are actually residents of the West Side neighborhood.



The West Side Initiative is directing its first efforts at a specific block in the West Side, referred to as the "First Project Area" (see Fig. 3). Currently defined, this area is bounded by Linden Street on the north, Dewey Street on the west, Bradford Street on the south, and Robbins Avenue to the east—but may be expanded to include other areas of the West Side. ²⁴ Bradford and Linden Streets are significant thoroughfares, while Robbins Ave. and Dewey are quieter residential streets. The block formed by the confluence of these four streets is

Map by Vivian Schoung, 2003. Modified by Green Team, 2003.

²³ Cornwell, Robert, Personal Communication, 1 December 2003.

²⁴ Cornwell, Robert. Personal Communication, 20 October 2003.

contains fourteen abandoned lots. These lots are varied in physical appearance and ownership status: some parcels are clean and mowed, while others are scattered with rubbish or overgrown. In terms of ownership, the majority of the parcels are currently privately owned, but a number owe significant back taxes and could be foreclosed on and transferred to the city (See Fig. 3). Another important physical feature of the site is the Housatonic River, running parallel to Dewey Street to the west of the neighborhood.

The definitions, goals and timeline of the West Side Initiative have been significantly influenced by the report of an outside consultant, John Ryan, who in 2003 interviewed approximately thirty residents and stakeholders.²⁵ Among other suggestions, the report found that a community garden sited in the West Side would be a popular project for local residents to become involved in. There is a substantial body of research suggesting potential benefits of community gardens in depressed urban areas. In the West Side a community garden could be an important move toward general neighborhood revitalization. Beyond simply increasing feelings of ownership and pride and beautifying the community, a successfully implemented garden that involved the residents and represented their interests could be a crucial component in rebuilding trust in the city government.²⁶

History of Regeneration

Like any city, Pittsfield faces complex and highly interdependent urban problems. Yet it is a city in transition where areas of decline, wealth and transformation co-exist.

The concentration of these multi-layered interactions in neighborhoods like the West Side have tremendous repercussions as they deeply permeate and affect the lives of residents and those in neighboring communities. There has been a distinctive movement by many residents of the West Side to deal with the problems associated with urban decay and poverty²⁷ as they continue to voice their desires of having a safe, healthy environment that is based on spiritual values and community partnership for themselves and their children.²⁸ These projects seek to instill community pride and unity through the

Ryan, John.
 For a more detailed description of the benefits of community gardening, see Appendix I.

²⁷ Nolan, Cheryl. Personal communication, 30 October 2003.

²⁸ Visioning Meeting. 27 October 2003.

social, economic and political empowerment and uplifting of the residents. The idea that stereotypes, prejudices, barriers must also be removed in order for effective rejuvenation to occur in the West Side has also won favor with activists of community development.²⁹ By emphasizing the positive aspects of the neighborhood—such as shared histories and community support systems—and educating outsiders that a normal life in the West Side is just like living any other town in Pittsfield, one can begin to eliminate the segregated and biased perceptions that arises as a consequence of economic, social and political imbalances and reduce the estrangement of this neighborhood from the rest of the city.³⁰

The drive to combat the erosive elements at the local level through community organization and activism—as reflected by the statement of community organizer and steering committee member, Cheryl Nolan: "...the community has to take a stand and show what they can do...We can't stand and hold our hand out. We've got to do things for ourselves."³¹—has prompted several ongoing community development projects in the West Side that complement but are not classified under the West Side Initiative. For example, The West Side neighborhood cleanup (early 1990s) was a mass street and property clean-up aimed at generating community goodwill, engender pride and responsibility in the neighborhood and encourage others to get involved and reconnect with the neighborhood.³² It was a City sponsored event where councilors and officials were involved in the planning, facilitation and actual clean up process. Cleaning materials—gloves, garbage bags, equipment and food—were donated by city departments and chain stores like Dunkin Donuts, Price Chopper and Stop & Shop. The project's credibility was further enhanced by the presence of local leaders such as the Reverend of one of the churches, long-time residents and/or natives of the neighborhood and high school students.³³ Other examples of community centered projects which took place during the 1990s include:

²⁹ Sukeinnik, Greg. "For many, West Side's the best." *The Berkshire Eagle*. 31 August 1997.

³⁰ Ibid

³¹ Ibid pA1

³² Carey, Bill. "Sowing the seeds of pride: Volunteers clean up the West Side." *The Berkshire Eagle*. (Date unknown.)

³³ Ibid

• 'Community Reunion':

Originally known as the 'Annual Gather In' this exposition of African-American culture, food, gospel, music and dancers was co-sponsored by Christian Centre and West Side Neighborhood Resource Centre and served as a celebratory opportunity for meeting, sharing and exchange among neighborhood residents.³⁴

• 'Take Back the Streets'

This event was organized by long-time resident Barbara Hanger in an attempt to mobilize the community through a unified rally to push for the physical and social clean up of the West Side.³⁵

• Youth Programs

- Sports leagues for basketball, baseball and softball developed under the Youth Improvement Program.³⁶
- Christian Center Garden tended mostly by children in the After-School Drop-In Enrichment Program.³⁷
- 'Education Project of Life' A youth awareness and empowerment program administered by the Association for Basic Community Development and Education (ABCDE) which is a local non-profit non-governmental community development corporation.³⁸

• Expansion of the West Side Neighborhood Resource Center

Moving this dominant community organization into larger vacant house immediately increased the Center's ability to provide the necessary resources to improve the quality of life of the neighborhood. Funding for this project was provided by community development block grant funding and privately raised monies by Peter Lafayette of the Berkshire Housing Development, banks and other institutions that had an interest in ensuring the stability of the West Side.³⁹

³⁴ Sukeinnik, Greg.

³⁵ Lamont, Raymond. "Decay vs. determination." *The Berkshire Eagle*. July 1991.

³⁶ Sukeinnik, Greg.

³⁷ Nolan, Cheryl. Personal communication. 30 October 2003.

³⁸ West Side Neighborhood Resource Center. (1995) Down by the riverside. v2 n4

³⁹ Sukeinnik, Greg. "Things going center's way." *The Berkshire Eagle*. 7 May 1997.

Local community organizations play an important role in the lives of many residents in the West Side⁴⁰ and are not limited to the provision of services. Community centers serve a more ubiquitous function of gathering and uniting persons interested in developing the community, preserving its positive attributes and eliminating the unhealthy features. The Christian Center of Pittsfield and the West Side Neighborhood Resource Center as well as Christian churches all have similar goals of enhancing the human capital of the West Side, combating the strains associated with poverty and providing support programs to adults and children to strengthen family values and community ties. 41 By giving the community members the tools, motivation and selfesteem to succeed, these neighborhood centers become integral driving forces that enable community organization, participation and mobilization which are crucial factors in developing and implementing successful community regeneration schemes.

Roadblocks to Regeneration

It is important to highlight the potential obstacles to the progress of the West Side Initiative and this project in particular. Many of these hurdles were of a "political" nature, involving a complex history between the city government and residents of Pittsfield. These will be explored below, and can be explained largely through a recounting of regeneration projects in Pittsfield—a long and detailed history that speaks to the complexity of the current initiative.

Declining Local Activism

Throughout the West Side neighborhood, the Team learned in interviews, there is a deep sentiment of disenfranchisement. Frustration, anger and resentment are emotions that are well-known by community activists in the West Side. 42 Individuals have become disillusioned with the city government after years of feeling ignored and deceived. A general feeling of discontent and distrust of the city government makes many West Side ambivalent about getting involved and skeptical about the city's commitment to improve

 40 Nolan, Cheryl. Personal communication, 30 October 2003. 41 Ibid

⁴² Ibid

the West Side. While the West Side Initiative does present an opportunity for empowerment at the local level and cooperation between residents and city officials, the fruition of that opportunity will depend on the willingness of individuals to trust and respond to the city's efforts—a move that has yet to occur.

Rehabilitation: A Finite Process?

The task of urban regeneration and community redevelopment is a long-term process which requires an extensive amount of resources, time and commitment. Although success can be defined by the attainment of defined project goals, the idea that neighborhood development is a finite process lies at the root of much frustration with community development projects and their stagnation. Community development is a stepped process where the time limits at each stage are highly flexible and subject to change. The process is rarely streamlined but rather is messy, complex, and requires extended amounts of time to unpack and clarify.

Administration Change

The West Side Initiative is the political thrust of Mayor Sarah Hathaway's administration. Though it is still in the nascent stages of organization and development, the recent elections have seen a change in administration and a possible shift in interests. There have been some criticisms of the Initiative circulating within the political realm and a change in the administration could possibly lead to a stalling of projects under the West Side Initiative. However, the new Mayor Elect James has voiced his support for continuing neighborhood revitalization plans⁴³ as such there is a strong possibility for the continued progression of the West Side Initiative.

III. GOALS & PROJECT OBJECTIVES

The community garden project is dependent upon the involvement and participation of the local community. The problem of apathy, lack of a sense of stakeholdership and ignorance at the residential level can prevent the successful implementation and maintenance of the garden. The Green Team's primary concern is

⁴³ http://www.jruberto.com/story. Visited December 2003.

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that efforts are made to survey, educate and inform the community of the benefits and advantages of having a community garden in the neighborhood and the steps needed to maintain it.

A WEST SIDE COMMUNITY GARDEN

This project considered the proposal of using community gardens as catalyst of neighborhood rejuvenation and beautification. The Green Team worked closely with the Pittsfield Department of Community Development (DCD), in conjunction with the West Side Steering Committee, composed of representatives from community organizations, city officials, churches, experts in relevant fields and residents. The West Side Steering Committee administers six specialized sub-committees: Vacant Lots, Vacant Building, Housing Committee; Beautification, Safety, Infrastructure Committee, Community Center/Youth Organizations Committee; Activities / Events Committee; Economic Development Committee; Finance Committee.

Through the West Side Initiative, interested parties embark on the challenging journey of developing of a partnership between the City, the committees, the residents as well as private and non-governmental, non-profit organizations with the intent of pooling a variety of financial and human resources together to devise successful multi-layered solutions to complex and interdependent problems. The City's main role is to provide funding and administrative support to sub-committees as they try to implement their respective projects while the authority of final decision-making rests with the Steering Committee.⁴⁵

The main goal of the community garden is to contribute to the overall social, economic and physical rejuvenation of the West Side urban environment.⁴⁶ At the local level it is an action initiative that aims to direct stakeholdership into the hands of community members.⁴⁷ Long-range goals include increasing neighborhood pride and

⁴⁶ Cornwell, Robert. Personal Communication, 23 November 2003.

⁴⁴ Sara Hathaway, Mark Amuso and Bob Cornwell proposed the idea of the West Side Initiative at a meeting at the Christian Center Committee and posted a sign-up sheet where people could volunteer or be nominated to the Steering Committee. Members tend to be prominent or active members in the community, specialists and experts in a relevant field. There are currently 21 members on the Steering Committee.

⁴⁵ Nolan, Cheryl. Personal Communication, 30 October 2003

⁴⁷ Bahlman, D.R. "West Side plan gets panel's endorsement." *The Berkshire Eagle*. (Date unavailable)

responsibility, the productive use of abandoned / vacant spaces, ⁴⁸ promoting food security and self-sustenance ⁴⁹ as well as providing a recreational space in a natural environment setting and serve as a source of physical activity for the residents. ⁵⁰

Green Team's Goals

The team's primary objective was to serve as a planning and assessment resource to the DCD and the relevant sub-committees. Through dialogue with our professors and Robert Cornwell, however, we eventually defined two main goals for our work: (1) to create a template for community garden development in Pittsfield; and (2) to evaluate each of the vacant lots in the First Project Area for their suitability as garden sites.

Our first major task was the compilation of a "Garden Guide" detailing the relevant planning steps in the development of a community garden. For reasons that will be elucidated in later sections, we also considered it important to identify possible policy obstacles and to suggest ways of maneuvering them. This product, titled "A Guide for Community Garden Planners in Pittsfield's West Side," was printed and distributed at our public presentation at the West Side Resource Center on 10 December, 2003.

The second of our major tasks involved surveying various sites of interest in the First Project Area and calculating the feasibility of constructing one or more community gardens in these specific vacant lots. This process of site identification, assessment, and policy analysis was grounded in site data collection and evaluation analyses. Specifically, we evaluated each site based on the following criteria: plot ownership, compatibility with the zoning ordinance and Wetland and River Protection Acts, sun exposure, fencing, size, flatness, surroundings, water availability, and visibility.

The team finally provided recommendations assisted by appropriate evaluation techniques (quantitative and qualitative) for determining the optimal site, use and design of the community garden/s. These methods of assessment and evaluation were carefully documented and can be used—as per the wish of Robert Cornwell—as a template and/or

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ohio State University Extension's Urban Gardening Program in Cuyahoga County. "Seeds of Hope... Harvest of Pride! What are the Benefits of Community Gardening?" http://www.brightdsl.net/~cuyahoga/benefits.html#Topic%201. Visited October 2003.

⁵⁰ Cornwell, Robert. Personal Communication, 20 October 2003.

model frameworks to apply to subsequent projects that involve the re-use of vacant or abandoned sites in other areas of Pittsfield.⁵¹

Background research focusing on Pittsfield, the West Side and the West Side Initiative served as foundation base for developing a holistic picture of the requirements, directional paths, problems and limitations that this project could encounter, giving the Team a clearer perspective of the factors and conditions that existed and their respective interactions. Interviews of government officials, committee members, garden experts and residents provided an in-depth understanding of the factors as well as new issues which were not evident in the secondary research materials. It was also important to obtain a general idea of the responsiveness of the community to the concept of a community garden in the neighborhood. As such the team surveyed First Project Area in the West Side neighborhood using community nodes such as the churches, the community center, convenience stores and community events to personally distribute these surveys.

COMMUNITY SURVEY RESULTS

In an attempt to gain a better understanding of the residents' perspectives on a having community garden as well as other needs in the neighborhood, the Green Team created and conducted a Community Survey (See Appendix 3).

Over a two week period, approximately 200 surveys were distributed door-to-door around the First Project area and at several community nodes, including: the Price Memorial Church, The Victory Temple Church, The Second Congregational Church and the Reigning Love Church services, The Christian Center, The West Side Neighborhood Resource Center and a local convenience store.

Sixty-three city residents completed and returned the surveys. Forty-two of these respondents resided in the West Side. Surveys returned from residents of the West Side were considered for data analysis.

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⁵¹ Cornwell, Robert. Personal Communication, 2 October 2003.

DEMOGRAPHICS

Age Distribution

Most respondents were between the ages of thirty to sixty-five years of age (count = 27), while the second highest group - those between the ages of eighteen and thirty – had a total of eight. The 'under eighteen' and 'over sixty-five' age categories had a low number of respondents (5 and 1 respectively). The age distribution is important because it can be used to highlight which groups would be willing to participate in a community garden given their age and associated responsibilities (i.e. dependents, non-dependents, working, retired)

Age Distribution

25

20

15

10

Under 18

18-30

30-65

65>

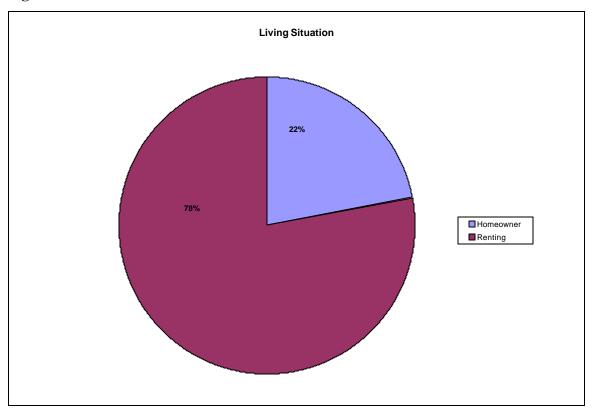
Figure S1.

Living Situation

Over 75% of the survey respondents were renters. The Team hypothesized that this could affect community preferences for a garden.

Age (years)

Figure S2.



SURVEY QUESTIONS

Q1. Would you like a community garden in your neighborhood?

Response	Percent
YES	95%
NO	5%

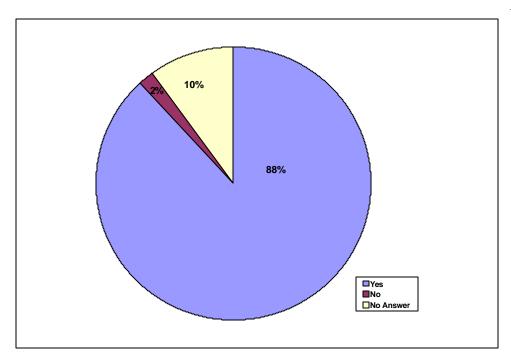
Table S1.

The survey response to a having community garden in the West Side is high.

Q2. If there were a community garden in your neighborhood, would you participate?

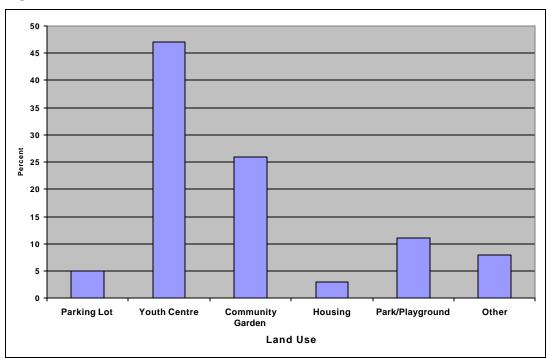
Eighty-eight percent of the respondents would be willing to participate in a community garden, indicating a high enough interest to successfully sustain a garden.

Figure S3.



Q3. What is your first choice use of a vacant lot?

Figure S4.



There is a high demand for a youth centre (47%). However community gardens have the second highest demand rate of 26%. These results show that residents are receptive to the idea of having a community garden. Even though the garden is not the first choice, since the West Side Initiative is a multi-pronged plan, the community garden can be a complementary project which would not compete for the same land or resources as other highly desired projects such as the Youth Center. A park/playground was the third most desirable use (11%), while Housing, Parking Lots and Other uses (e.g. Business, Memorial Park) were all below 10%.

Q4. What type of garden would you like to see?

Item	Percent popularity
Vegetables	67%
Fruits	57%
Flowers	83%
Sitting Area	67%

Table S2.

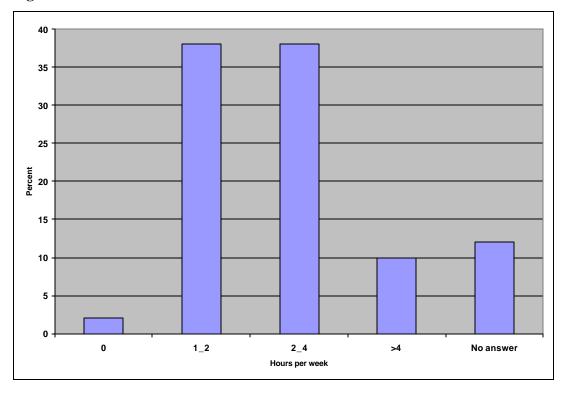
N.B. One or more items could be checked on the same survey. Items were not mutually exclusive

The survey results show that 83% of the all respondents want flowers in the community garden. Sixty seven percent of the respondents want vegetables and sitting areas while 57% of the respondents want fruits.

Q5. How much time would you be willing to commit to working in a community garden?

Most people are willing to devote between 1 and 4 hours per week to a community garden.

Figure S5.



SUMMARY

Overall, the response from the survey sample to the idea of a community garden in the West Side is very positive—even though there *is* a small percentage against the proposal. The survey results suggest that although community garden is not the most desired project, it is still considered as a viable option for the neighborhood rejuvenation. Most of the respondents would be willing to participate and the time commitment is flexible so that working individuals (ages 18-65) are able to participate as well. A combination garden should be considered when planning and designing the outlay of the garden in order to satisfy as many of the community preferences as possible. The assumption that a high percentage of renters would skew preferences away from having a garden was rejected.

V. HISTORY OF COMMUNITY GARDENING IN PITTSFIELD

In our early conversations with West Side residents, we constantly heard reference to an earlier effort to create community gardens in Pittsfield, in a neighborhood not far from the First Project Area. The following is a history of that earlier attempt—a story from which invaluable lessons have been drawn by our team.

Previous Gardening Effort: Green Thumbs Down

The idea of community gardening as a tool of community revitalization is not new to Pittsfield. As recently as June of 2003, a previous, fully grassroots gardening initiative resigned itself to failure after nearly a decade of dreaming, organization and effort. The West Side Garden Club was founded in 1993 by Fran King, a gardening enthusiast who had worked with young people in the West Side for over two decades. Fran's vision for change in the West Side involved a garden in every neighborhood. Gardening, she knew from experience, gives at-risk urban youth something constructive to do and be proud of, and can genuinely address the many scourges—crime, human isolation, environmental ugliness—of depressed urban neighborhoods. ⁵²

The fifteen adults and 10-50 young members of the Garden Club began with minor projects to learn about gardening: first planting for the elderly, then a 20' x 50' community garden behind the West Side Neighborhood Resource Center (WNRC) on John Street. By 1998, the Club had evolved into the West Side Green Thumbs, a 4-H group registered with the University of Massachusetts. Now a city-recognized organization with growing membership, Fran's group pursued the same mission as from its inception: to establish much-needed community gardening in West Side neighborhoods. After two years of minor projects, the group felt prepared to renew its first vacant lot. The lot selection process was confined to an area to the west of the First Project Area, on the opposite side of the Housatonic River, in a neighborhood surrounded by Columbus Ave., John St., Linden St. and Dewey Ave. After a thorough search, the lot at 78 John Street was chosen, and the Green Thumbs managed to obtain a one-year lease from the city of Pittsfield on the property. 53

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⁵² King, Fran. Personal Communication, 29 October 2003.

⁵³ Ibid.

Before the ground of the John Street lot could be broken, however, Fran King and her eager young gardeners confronted a host of problems in adopting the site. Concerns over liability were resolved through a partnership with the UMass 4-H program; a special permit for the construction of a tall fence around the garden was secured from the Pittsfield Zoning Board; the danger of lead contamination in the soil was averted through a plan for raised beds, where clean soil would be brought in from elsewhere. At the end of April 2003, the start of the season in which the Green Thumbs had planned to begin their first major garden, the John Street lot was determined to be located in the 100-year floodplain of the river—a zoning district with which raised beds were incompatible. The materials that the Green Thumbs proposed to add to the site (wooden beams and soil for raised beds, a shed, small greenhouse and compost pile) threatened the loss of 1976 cubic feet of storage for floodwater, requiring the group to submit a Notice of Intent (NOI) to the Pittsfield Conservation Commission.⁵⁴ This Notice of Intent was submitted to the Conservation Commission and the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) on May 22, 2003.

Fran King and Caleb Mitchell, the professional Conservation Agent in Pittsfield, both recall that collaborative moves were made between the Green Thumbs and the ConCom at the Commission's May 29 meeting. According to Fran, once the compost pile and shed had been relocated (in the garden plans) farther from the river's edge, the Conservation Commission expressed its willingness to support the garden project. Caleb Mitchell remembers the common sense that informed the Commission's position: because the project proposed was a small vegetable garden that posed no human or ecological health hazards, and that furthermore promised to benefit the community, the issue of floodwater storage seemed largely trivial.

The DEP disagreed. On June 16, the DEP issued its "Notification of Wetlands Protection Act File Number" to the Pittsfield Conservation Commission. This is a standard document sent to all applicants for development within Wetland Protection areas, and has two purposes. It first assigns a file number to the project: in this case, 263-772. Secondly, the form provides a preliminary review of the applicant's proposal,

⁵⁴ West Side Green Thumbs 4-H Gardening Club. Notice of Intent. 22 May 2003. Page 3.

⁵⁵ (1) Public Hearing Notice. (2) King, Fran. Personal Communication, 29 October 2003. (3) Mitchell, Caleb. Personal Communication, 13 November 2003.

assessing its compliance with the Wetland Protection Act (WPA) and offering suggestions for the improvement of the application. The DEP cannot, at this stage, approve or reject a project proposal. It can instead guide the applicant and local Conservation Commission in bringing the project into compliance with the WPA. Once the Commission has granted a permit to the project applicant, the DEP can appeal the Commission's decision; this "Notification of Wetlands Protection Act File Number" is thus intended to help applicants avoid a DEP revocation of their permit. ⁵⁶

The DEP form received by Caleb Mitchell in June 16 noted that the Green Thumbs' garden proposal neglected to provide compensatory storage in the proposed development area, and thus "fail[ed] General Performance Standards for work within Bordering Land Subject to Flooding." It made a number of suggestions for the modification of the Green Thumbs' site plan, namely for the provision of compensatory storage. In their original NOI, the Green Thumbs had proposed that the demolition of a house that had previously stood on the property—an event that had happened two years earlier—provide compensatory storage. The DEP made it clear in its review of the NOI that this strategy was unacceptable: "Use of a volume of buildings that were previously demolished does not provide for compensation of flood storage lost." In order for the garden project to be brought into compliance with WPA regulations, storage for floodwater would have to be provided by some alternative—and probably costly—means.

Speaking to us in November of 2003, Caleb Mitchell expressed frustration with the behavior of the DEP. Namely, he was disappointed that the Department had not exhibited more leniency toward a project with such obvious benefits to the Pittsfield community. After the arrival of the DEP form, Mitchell told us, the Pittsfield Conservation Commission planned to approve the project anyway, suspecting that the DEP would not bother to appeal such a benign infraction of WPA law. Before this process could take place, however, the Green Thumbs put an end to the project. On July

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⁵⁶ Gillian, Susan. DEP Wetlands Program. Personal Communication, 25 November 2003.

⁵⁷ Commonwealth of Massachusetts Executive Office of Environmental Affairs Department of Environmental Protection. "Re: Notification of Wetlands Protection Act File Number." (File number: 263-772) 16 June 2003. (See Appendix 4.)

⁵⁸ Mitchell, Caleb. Personal Communication, November 2003.

⁵⁹ Gillian, Susan. DEP Wetlands Program. Personal Communication, 25 November 2003.

15, a letter from the DCD informed Mitchell that the Green Thumbs had abandoned its plans for a garden at 78 John Street.

In the language of Glen Russo, the DCD's Deputy Director, the Green Thumbs Garden Club had found the "entire process . . . too overwhelming to proceed with only a small group of volunteers." Fran King offered a similar, while more detailed, explanation: once the state became involved, what had begun as a "simple" gardening project became rife with legalistic complications. Time was an additional complication. In the project's tenth year, the basic dream of gardening remained caught in a web of contingencies: a fence could not be erected around the site until the application was cleared with the state; raised beds could not be built until the fence was erected; the garden could not be planted until the raised beds were built. By the time the decision from the state was articulated, half of the growing season had passed, and the 4-H youth members who had been promised a garden were beginning to lose interest. Finally, as some of the funding for the Green Thumbs project was intended for the summer of 2003, the organization lost a proportion of their financial support when the season passed without a planting. Faced with a shrinking budget and base of enthusiasm, the Green Thumbs made the decision "not to drag on" a process that seemed unlikely to succeed. 61

Severe funding cuts in the fall of 2003 have caused the Green Thumbs to suffer a second blow to its resources and morale.⁶² For this reason and because of their own fatigue with the planning process, both Fran King and Judy O'Connor, King's partner in directing the Green Thumbs, have expressed reluctance to assume leadership roles in a future gardening project. At the same time, both have expressed wholehearted support for such future efforts, as they maintain their belief that gardening will be of great benefit to the West Side.

Robert Cornwell attributed the collapse of the Green Thumbs' project, in part, to the unfamiliarity of residents with the bureaucratic processes involved in zoning and conservation laws.⁶³ In recounting her full decade of effort, Fran King did indeed express frustration with the bureaucratic process. To her, the minor details of city planning

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⁶⁰ Letter. Sender: Glenn A. Russo, Deputy Director, DCD. Recipient: Caleb Mitchell, Conservation Agent, Pittsfield. 15 July 2003.

⁶¹ King, Fran. Personal communication, 17 November 2003.

⁶² King, Fran. Personal Communication, 29 October 2003.

⁶³ Cornwell, Robert. Personal Communication, 30 October 2003.

obscured the larger, fundamental urgency of her task: to bring relief, in the modest but effective form of a garden, to an ailing section of town. ⁶⁴ It is the expressed hope of both Fran King and Robert Cornwell that our team will be able to glean lessons from the previous effort, and use our background in planning to identify stages of the process—and obstacles to its completion—from the beginning.

VI. A GUIDE FOR COMMUNITY GARDEN PLANNERS

As the experience of the Green Thumbs demonstrates, the process of planning a community garden is fraught with legal and technical complications. With this in mind, we have attempted to design a "How To" guide for community garden planning in the West Side and Pittsfield in general. The following pages will provide basic explanations of Zoning and Conservation law as they may apply to community gardens, a list of possible funding and support sources for community gardens in Pittsfield, and a list of publications and contacts that we found helpful in our work. It is our hope that this guide will enable West Side residents with a positive vision for their neighborhoods to navigate the technical challenges of garden planning, and ultimately bring to fruition a project that has been a long time in coming to the West Side.

ZONING LAW

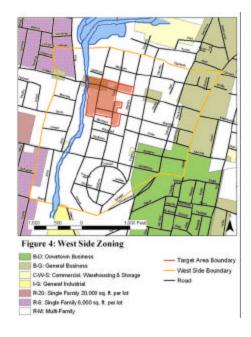
One of the most formidable obstacles that planners of community gardens face is the Zoning Ordinance, which regulates land use in Pittsfield with the aim of "promot[ing] the health, safety, convenience and welfare of the City." This section will familiarize garden organizers with the relevant parts of the Zoning Ordinance, identifying the rules applicable to a garden project and helping organizers to comply with those rules.

⁶⁵ City of Pittsfield: Zoning Ordinance. Article 23-1, "Purpose."

⁶⁴ King, Fran. Personal Communication, 29 October 2003.

West Side Zoning

Pittsfield's West Side is zoned into a number of disparate sections (see Figure 4). The bulk of the West Side is zoned for residential uses, with a much larger area dedicated



to Multi-Family housing (R-M) than to Single-Family residences with 6,000 square feet per lot (R-6). As Figure 4 shows, small portions of the West Side are also zoned for General Business (B-G), Downtown Business (B-D), and Commercial, Warehousing and Storage (C-W-S).

The First Project Area, identified as the "Target Area" in Figure 4, is zoned almost entirely for Multi-Family housing (R-M), with a small patch in the northwest corner dedicated to General Business (B-G). All of the vacant lots eligible for garden development in the First

Map by Vivian Schoung, 2003. Modified by Green Team, 2003.

Project Area are in the R-M zone, however.

Gardening and West Side Zoning

According to Dave Hathaway, the Principal Planner for the City of Pittsfield, the Zoning Ordinance does not prohibit community gardening on any property in Pittsfield, including the Multi-Family Residential (R-M) zones that dominate the West Side. Hathaway explained that gardens are not regulated by the Ordinance because they are considered a temporary, or "stop-gap," use of property, and can easily be dismantled in favor of more permanent development of a site. The legal issue is more one of land

ownership than of zoning: if the owner of a lot is a willing participant in the garden project, the project is legal. ⁶⁶

While the Zoning Ordinance does not affect to the legal status of a garden project, it does provide spatial parameters with which a garden project must comply. The main such parameters are those regulating the height of fences and setbacks.

Fences and Setbacks

In order to protect a community garden from intruders (human and non-human), virtually all garden organizers choose to surround their garden with a fence. Section 4.306 of the Zoning Ordinance, "Projections Into Yards," provides height regulations for fences. In all zones, rear and side lot fences cannot exceed 6 feet in height and cannot be less than 60% solid.⁶⁷ Unless a special permit is obtained from the ZBA, fences must also comply with the mandatory front yard setback for a particular zone.

Section 4.203 of the Zoning Ordinance, the Schedule of Intensity Regulations, establishes minimum setbacks on the front, sides and rear of a property for all uses on that property. According to Dave Hathaway, the only setback applicable to a fence is the setback for the front of the property. In an R-M zone, a lot must maintain a setback of 15 feet in the front; in an R-6 zone, the front setback must be 20 feet. Thus a fence build on a vacant lot in the R-M zoned section of the First Project area would need to be set back 15 feet from the main road (creating a front yard 15 feet deep), and could extend to the edges of the property on the sides and in the back. (See Figure 5.) In this scenario, garden organizers would be working entirely within the parameters of the Zoning Ordinance, and would only need to obtain one permit from City Hall: permission from the Building Inspection Department to construct a fence.

If a garden organizer wishes to minimize the front setback to extend the garden toward the front of the property, s/he must apply for a special permit from the Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA). An application for a special permit can be obtained from the Building Inspection office and filed with the City Clerk's office, for a filing fee of \$200. Once filed, the appeal is presented to the Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA), which then

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⁶⁶ Hathaway, Dave. Personal communication, 18 November 2003.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

decides whether to reduce the setback.⁶⁸ As is apparent from this description, the process for procuring a special permit can be expensive and involved! Community groups with a low budget may find it more productive to observe the 15-foot front setback and avoid the special permitting process entirely. Dave Hathaway suggested creating a sitting area in the front yard with flower plantings to make use of the space.

If garden organizers do apply for a permit to extend fencing into the front yard of a lot, they should allow the permitting process several months. Citizens often grow frustrated with the slow pace of government decisions. In order to avoid this frustration and any inconvenience in garden development, planners should create a time schedule flexible enough to accommodate a long deliberation by the ZBA.

R-M Zone

AFENCE

Fence:

Get high max.

3 max. 60% solid

Fence

VFENCE

Minimum Front Yard = 15 feet

R-6 Zone

AFENCE

AFENCE

AFENCE

Minimum Front Yard = 20 feet

Figure 5. Mandatory Fence Setbacks for R-M and R-6 zones.

Zoning Contacts

The following contacts will be useful in addressing the zoning issues related to starting a community garden:

Pittsfield Building Inspections Department

Room 04 at City Hall, 70 Allen Street, Pittsfield, MA, 01201 Office Hours: Monday - Friday, 7:30 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.

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⁶⁸ Hathaway, Dave. Personal communication, 19 November 2003.

Acting Building Commissioner: William Thorton

Phone: 413.499.9441

Local Building Inspector: Jonathon Lunt

Phone: 413.499.9406

David P. Hathaway, Principal Planner, Department of Community Development *Room 205 at City Hall, 70 Allen Street, Pittsfield, MA, 01201*

Phone: 413.499.9366

Jody L. Phillips, City Clerk

Room 103 at City Hall, 70 Allen St., Pittsfield, MA, 01201

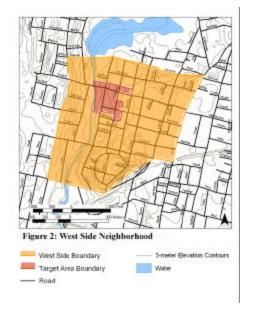
Phone: 413.499.9361

WETLANDS AND FLOODPLAINS: CONSERVATION LAW

The second set of land-use standards with which garden planners might have to contend is the Wetland and Rivers Protection Act. These regulations aim to protect wetlands (a category inclusive of rivers, lakes and marshes), which are considered among the most biologically productive ecosystems on earth.⁶⁹

Floodplains in the West Side

There currently exists no comprehensive wetland mapping of Pittsfield. A glance at Figure 2, however, suggests that the only major body of water in the West Side neighborhood is the West Branch of the Housatonic River. In the West Side, then, the main resource area subject to protection under the Wetland and Rivers Protection Act is the land along the banks of the Housatonic. This area, the "estimated maximum lateral"



⁶⁹ Marsh, William M. "Wetlands, Habitat and Land Use Planning." <u>Landscape Planning: Environmental Applications</u>. John Wiley & Sons, 1997.

extent of flood water which will theoretically result from the statistical 100-year frequency storm,"⁷⁰ is called the 100-year floodplain. According to the provisions of the Wetland Protection Act, the 100-year floodplain is to be kept clear of major development. Any construction in this space is considered a loss of "storage" for floodwater, which it will displace onto sites further downstream.

Gardens, considered minor development, are not categorically prohibited by the Wetland Protection Act. However, raised bed gardening entails the loss of storage space within floodplains, and is thus subject to regulation under the Act. Because the probability of soil contamination in Pittsfield is so high, this section will assume that garden projects within the city will use raised bed gardening—and will thus be subject to regulation by the Wetland Protect Act.

Within the West Side, all properties located within the 100-year floodplain of the Housatonic's West Branch will be located on John Street, King Street, or Dewey Avenue (See Figure 6). The first two of these are on the west side of the river, while the third is on the east. Because Pittsfield lacks detailed maps of its floodplain areas, individuals hoping to develop on a John St., King St. or Dewey Ave. property should consult a map (available from the City's Engineering Office) to determine that property's general proximity to a floodplain. If the property appears to be close to the 100-year floodplain, the prospective property developer may determine the precise boundaries of the floodplain by contacting the local Conservation Commission. Land found to be located within a 100-year floodplain may be developed only with approval of the Conservation Commission and the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (DEP).

Once it is determined that the floodplain rules to apply to a property, prospective developers must submit a Notice of Intent (NOI) detailing their plan for the property to the Conservation Commission and the DEP. For a non-city affiliated group, the NOI filing process costs a little over \$100.00: the actual filing fee is \$55.00, and the legal notice published in the Berkshire Eagle costs \$51.00. If garden planners file the NOI with a city department (the DCD, for example) as a project partner, the filing fee for the NOI is waived, reducing the total cost to \$51.00. After the NOI is filed, the DEP will issue a review. This review assigns a file number to the project and evaluates its

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 $^{^{70}}$ "The Massachusetts Wetland and Rivers Protection Acts 1972 (Revised 1983, 1987, 1996)." p. 2.

compliance with the Wetland Protection Act. If the proposed project is not in compliance with the Act, the DEP will suggest ways in which the plan can be improved. After the DEP review is released, the Pittsfield Conservation Commission can issue a permit for the project, and the DEP can appeal only if the project remains out of compliance with the Wetland Protection Act.

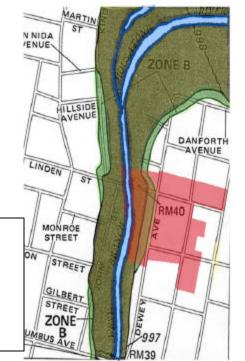
Caleb Mitchell, the Pittsfield Conservation Agent, advises raised bed gardening for all community gardens in the city. On a floodplain property, steps can be taken to design a garden to comply with the Wetland Protection Act. First, the garden should be set back at least 50 feet from the riverfront to maintain a buffer between the river and the garden. Secondly, the garden should provide compensatory floodwater storage for each unit of space it occupies on the site. The simplest way to do provide compensatory storage in a raised bed scenario is to remove as much soil from the site as is brought in.⁷¹ This option will be further detailed in the upcoming section on soil quality.

Again, we feel it important to urge garden planners to allow the Conservation Commission and the DEP several months to review Notices of Intent. If gardeners hope to begin planting in a given May, they should file their NOI in early winter. This gives planners enough time to receive the DEP review and implement any proposed changes.

First Project Area

As is visible in Figure 6, the only section of the First Project Area located within the 100-year floodplain is along the western edge of Dewey Avenue. It appears that at least the western portion of these lots within the First Project Area may be located

Figure 6: Floodplains of the West Branch of the Housatonic River in the West Side. The gray area represents the 100-year floodplain, and the green area the 500-year floodplain. The First Project Area is indicated in pink. (Firm: Flood Insurance Rate Map. "City of Pittsfield, Massachusetts, Berkshire County." February 19, 1982.)



⁷¹ Mitchell, Caleb. Personal Communication, 26 November 2003.

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within the floodplain. In considering these properties as potential sites for a garden, garden organizers should beware the complications involved in applying for exceptions from the Wetland and Rivers Protection Act. As the West Side Green Thumbs learned in their effort to create a garden in the John Street floodplain, dealing with city and state conservation agencies can be a complicated and unpredictable process. Garden planners in the First Project Area are advised to prioritize vacant lots outside of the floodplain before giving earnest consideration to those within it.

Conservation Law Contacts:

For more information on the Wetland and Rivers Protection Act or on filing a Request for Determination of Applicability or a Notice of Intent, contact:

Caleb Mitchell, Conservation Agent, Department of Public Works Phone: 413.499.9359

Pete Powers, Engineer, Department of Public Works Phone: 413.499.9327

WHAT MAKES A GARDEN GROW, PART 1: SOIL QUALITY AND HUMAN HEALTH

One of the main goals of a community garden is to promote human health, both physical and psychological. This goal is confounded when environmental pollutants threaten the health of individuals working and playing in a garden. In this section, we provide a brief overview of soil contamination issues in Pittsfield and the West Side, and give advice on developing a garden that truly serves the well being of a community.

PCBs and Lead Contamination

Soil contamination is an enormous concern of gardeners in Pittsfield. General Electric (GE), the largest employer of Pittsfield residents in the early and middle 20th century, was revealed in the 1970s and 1980s to have contaminated a number of public and residential properties with polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), in addition to discharging dangerous amounts of the carcinogenic substance into the Housatonic River. According to a 1997 study by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health, residents of the Housatonic River Area in Pittsfield may have had unsafe exposure to PCBs

through numerous sources, including the consumption of vegetables grown in contaminated soil.⁷²

As this statement suggests, eating produce grown in PCB-contaminated soil is an actual risk in Pittsfield. In order to avoid this risk, garden planners should carefully consider the soil quality of the site on which a garden will be located. According to several local experts, the West Side of Pittsfield seems largely out of danger of PCB contamination. The reasons for this are several: The West Branch of the Housatonic River that flows through the West Side is upstream of the GE plant, thus freeing it of PCB contamination discharged directly from the plant itself. 73 GE's program of distributing PCB-contaminated fill to employees was taken advantage of mainly by individuals developing new properties—that is, people seeking to fill in uneven terrain on properties in order to build on them. ⁷⁴ As a relatively old section of Pittsfield, the West Side neighborhood has had little new development within the past 50-100 years. Because most of its homes were standing before GE began its fill distribution program, few residents in the West Side were likely to receive fill directly from GE. Finally, the West Side and the GE plant are located on essentially opposite ends of Pittsfield; GE employed relatively few individuals from the West Side, another factor explaining the low prevalence of PCB contamination in the West Side.

The Massachusetts DEP runs a residential PCB cleanup program, whereby all residents of Pittsfield concerned with the possibility of PCB contamination on their property are entitled to sampling, testing, and remediation if necessary. According to Eileen Barnes of the DEP, very few properties in the West Side have ever reported concern about PCB contamination—and none in the First Project Area have done so. According to Barnes, this reporting system is a fairly reliable indicator of the presence of PCBs in a neighborhood. The DEP's results can thus be taken to suggest the general absence of PCBs from residential properties in the West Side, and particularly in the First Project Area.⁷⁵

⁷² MA Dept. of Public Health, Bureau of Environmental Health Assessment. Environmental Toxicology Unit. "Housatonic River Area PCB Exposure Assessment Study: Final Report." September 1997.

⁷³ Barnes, Eileen. MA DEP. Personal Communication, 19 November 2003.

⁷⁴ Gray, Tim. Housatonic River Initiative (HRI). Log Lunch Talk, 14 November 2003.

⁷⁵ Barnes, Eileen. MA DEP. Personal Communication, 19 November 2003.

The probable absence of PCBs, however, indicates nothing about levels of other contaminants present in West Side soils. Lead is of particular concern. Because the majority of the homes in the West Side were constructed before 1972, they are almost certainly painted with lead paint. Especially in the case of poorly maintained houses, lead paint may flake into the soil surrounding a house, becoming a health hazard for individuals who come in contact with and/or ingest the soil. Eileen Barnes has also suggested that the West Branch of the Housatonic River should not be considered uncontaminated. While free of PCBs, it may be contaminated with other toxic materials discharged from residential and/or industrial properties along the river. During flooding events, these materials may have contaminated the soils in the floodplain of the Housatonic—in many cases, in the back yards of residential properties.

Avoiding Contamination: Raised Beds

For these reasons, and because city soil is unlikely to be highly fertile, planners of a community garden are advised to develop a garden with raised beds containing clean, high quality soil from an outside source. If approached correctly, local farms may be willing to donate excess soil for the worthy cause of an urban garden. Garden organizers are also advised to have the existing soil on the site tested for contaminants like lead and PCBs. Knowledge of the soil's content will allow planners to design the safest, most child-friendly garden as possible. If the soil is found to be impure, garden designers must be careful to separate the contaminated soil from the imported clean soil with layers of impermeable materials, to ensure that no leaching of contaminants into the garden occurs.

In a floodplain area, the addition of material to a site will result in the loss of compensatory storage unless a corresponding volume of material is removed from the site. Caleb Mitchell suggests that gardeners simply remove the amount of soil they intend to bring in, line the cavity with impermeable materials, and use imported timbers and soil to construct a new, clean garden. Garden planners might dispose of the removed soil in two ways. First, if the soil is tested and determined to be free of contaminants, they might advertise it as clean fill and give it away.

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⁷⁶ Karns, Nat. Berkshire Regional Planning Commission. Personal Communication, 18 November 2003.

⁷⁷ Barnes, Eileen. MA DEP. Personal Communication, 19 November 2003.

If the soil is found to be contaminated, garden organizers might contact the Maxymillian Technologies Analytical Laboratory in Pittsfield for a discussion of disposal options. While Maxymillian itself does not dispose of contaminated soil, its experts can recommend various disposal procedures depending on the concentrations of toxins in the soil (contaminated, elevated, or hazardous), the amount of soil, and the soil type. In general, small quantities (fewer than 30 tons) of soil with high levels of PCBs (50ppm or more) can be disposed of for \$300 per ton. At hazardous levels, lead-contaminated soil can be disposed of for approximately \$250 per ton. Regina Simmons of Maxymillian named two disposal facilities in Western New York likely to deal with contaminated soil found in Pittsfield lots: (1) Waste Management, Inc. of Model City, which accepts soil with high levels of PCBs and lead; and (2) High Acres of Rochester, which accepts materials with elevated or low levels of PCB and lead contamination.⁷⁹

Another Hazard: Treated Timber

One material necessary to the construction of raised beds is timber. Despite the enticement of wood treated with chemical preservatives, gardeners are cautioned against using treated wood, which contains arsenic—exposure to which may increase a person's risk of developing lung or bladder cancer in their lifetime. 80 Instead of treated wood, garden builders might use recycled timbers, which can be purchased through Pittsfield's Dettinger Lumber Company.

Soil Quality and Lumber Contacts:

Soil testing can be done most cost effectively through Spectrum Analytical of Agawam, Massachusetts. Spectrum Analytical charges \$60.00 per sample for PCB testing and \$15.00 per sample for lead. For more information, call:

> **Spectrum Analytical** Agawam, MA

Phone: 413.789.9018

Anthony, John. Maxymillian. Personal Communication, 3 December 2003.
 Simmons, Regina. Maxymillian. Personal Communication, 3 December 2003.

^{80 &}quot;Fact Sheet: Chromated Copper Arsenate (CCA)." http://www.cpsc.gov/phth/ccafact.html. Visited 3 December 2003.

Some local farms and stables that may be contacted for the donation or purchase of soil, manure, and soil amendments are:

Holiday Farm

Dalton, MA

Phone: 413.684.0444

Blythewood Farm

372 Churchill St., Pittsfield, MA

Phone: 413.499.7964

Mountain View Farm

181 Summer St., Pittsfield, MA Phone: 413.445.7642

Holiday Farm Stables

176 Route 9, Dalton, MA Phone: 413.684.9963

For information on the disposal of soil removed from floodplain areas, contact:

Maxymillian Technologies Analytical Laboratory

Pittsfield, MA 01201 Phone: 413.499.3050

Dave Slowick, Bureau of Waste Site Cleanup, DEP

Phone: 413.755.2246

For information on the purchase of recycled timbers, contact:

Dettinger Lumber Company Incorporated

24 Warringer Street, Pittsfield, MA

Phone: 413.442.6916

WHAT MAKES A GARDEN GROW, PART 2: ESTABLISHING A WATER SOURCE

Gardens require water to grow. In New England, where an inconstant climate cannot be relied upon to provide rains regular and plentiful enough to support a garden, garden planners should identify a regular source of water. A successful community garden will most likely have its own spigot within the garden to which hoses can be directly attached.

If provided with a lot number, the Pittsfield Department of Public Works will be able to determine whether a water line runs directly to the prospective garden site. If it does, a water meter can be installed at a relatively low cost.⁸¹ If a water line does *not* enter the site, however, gardeners may need to have nearby water lines extended into the site from the main water line. This is an expensive process, potentially costing in the thousands of dollars. For an actual cost to be ascertained, however, garden planners will need to hire a contractor to examine the site and make a cost estimate. We found Donovan Construction to be extremely helpful and responsive in surveying five properties in the First Project Area; at no cost, the estimator from Donovan evaluated the properties and projected that for each, the installation of a water line from the main would cost around \$3,500.00.82

Once a contractor who is insured and bonded with the city of Pittsfield has been located, garden planners must submit a Request for Proposal to the Department of Public Works. This is a permit to extend a water line into the site, and costs \$425.00 (a cost included in Donovan's estimate for our five lots in the First Project Area). According to Mark Piacenti of the Department of Public Works, permission is usually granted within a week of proposal. Once permission is granted, the construction can proceed.⁸³

Should the cost of installing a water line to the site prove inhibitive, a second possibility is the use of water from the outdoor spigot of an abutting property. This option will require the consent of the property owner, and perhaps an arrangement to pay for the water used by the garden.

Water Source Contacts

For information on the water status of a particular site, contact:

Department of Public Works

Rooms B01 & B02 at City Hall, 70 Allen St., Pittsfield, MA, 01201

Phone: 413.499.9330

One local contractor we recommend is Donovan Construction:

⁸¹ Piacenti, Mark. City Engineer. Personal Communication, 12 May 2003.

⁸² Estimator, Donovan Construction. Personal Communication, 10 December 2003.

⁸³ Piacenti, Mark. Personal Communication, 12 May 2003.

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WHAT MAKES A GARDEN GROW, PART 3: FINANCIAL AND MATERIAL RESOURCES

While the Department of Community Development (DCD) is supportive of community gardening in the West Side, Robert Cornwell has emphasized that the DCD will not be able to provide the sum of material support needed by gardeners. Cornwell noted that the City's main contribution to future gardening projects will be the donation of land. As part of the West Side Initiative, the city government aspires to reclaim many of the vacant parcels that litter the West Side—including all of the abandoned lots in the First Project Area—and develop them. If one of these city-owned lots is selected as a garden site, Cornwell hinted, the city may offer the lot to the garden group.

As DCD financial resources are limited, however, Robert Cornwell would encourage garden organizers to seek funding from non-municipal sources.⁸⁴ This was in part the Green Thumbs' approach in their earlier garden effort, and Fran King was indeed of invaluable help to our team in identifying potential sources of funding. The following is a list of private and public resources that garden organizers may be tap for support.

Land Acquisition

As mentioned in the section on Zoning, any property owner wishing to develop a garden on his/her property may legally do so. Within the West Side, however, the majority of unoccupied lots belong to the City of Pittsfield or by absentee owners with little stake in the neighborhood. As part of the West Side Initiative, the DCD intends to appropriate all of the vacant lots in the West Side and, through the guidance of the West Side Steering Committee and its sub-committees, develop them. It is thus likely that properties considered for community gardens will be in the possession of the City.

Robert Cornwell of the DCD has described the process by which citizens may request a parcel of city-owned land for the creation of community gardens. First, the individual desiring the garden must write a letter to the DCD, requesting that s/he be given the parcel. Once the DCD receives the letter, it must clear the transfer of property through the City Council. The process of property transfer can take from 6-12 months, and at the end the non-profit owner is exempt from paying taxes. While the exact cost of

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⁸⁴ Cornwell, Robert. Personal Communication, 13.November.2003.

a property transfer cannot be determined prior to the transfer process, Cornwell predicts that land will be disposed to a garden group at no cost or a low cost.⁸⁵

Because the DCD is only implicated in liability issues on city-owned property, community gardeners on a privately owned parcel will not be required by the City to purchase liability insurance.

For more information on acquiring land from the city, contact:

Robert Cornwell, Neighborhood Development Administrator, DCD Room 205 at City Hall, 70 Allen Street, Pittsfield, MA, 01201 Phone: 413.499.9450

Funding

(1) City of Pittsfield: Department of Community Development (DCD)

The Department of Community Development receives approximately \$1.8 million in Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds annually. 86 This block grant, administered by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), is mainly intended to benefit low-income residents of Pittsfield. Citizens and citizen groups may apply to receive portions of the CDBG money for a community improvement project; the main eligibility criterion is that more than 50% of the individuals benefiting from the project are low-income.

There are two processes by which one can apply for Community Development money. The city does take written requests on an ongoing basis; letters can be written to Mark Amuso, the Director of the DCD. The DCD also holds a budget review process in the spring. At a series of public hearings, the DCD solicits recommendations from the public for the use of CDBG funds. These hearings typically happen in March and are advertised in the Berkshire Eagle.⁸⁷

For more information, contact:

Mark Amuso, Jr., Director, DCD Room 205 at City Hall, 70 Allen Street, Pittsfield, MA, 01201 Email: mamuso@pittsfieldch.com

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⁸⁵ Cornwell, Robert. Personal Communication, 1 December 2003.

^{86 &}quot;City of Pittsfield: City Government: Community Development." (Website.) http://www.pittsfieldma.org/departments/community.html. Visited 17 November 2003.

87 Cornwell, Robert. Personal Communication, 19 November 2003.

Phone: 413.499.9358

(2) USDA: Community Food Projects Competitive Grant Program

As part of its Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service (CSREES), the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) sponsors a Community Food Projects Competitive Grant Program. In the USDA's language, "Community Food Projects are designed to increase food security in communities by bringing the whole food system together to assess strengths, establish linkages, and create systems that improve the self-reliance of community members over their food needs."

The USDA grant is a one-time infusion of \$10,000-\$300,000, awarded to a private non-profit group intending to carry out a multi-purpose community food project. Proposed projects must, among other criteria, plan for long-term solutions and/or create innovative marketing activities that benefit both agricultural producers and low-income consumers. With its elaborate requirements, the USDA grant seems beyond the reach of a single community gardening project in the Pittsfield West Side, but would prove an excellent resource for large-scale food system overhaul in the case that smaller projects succeed and eventually build momentum!

These USDA websites provide descriptions of projects to which grants have been awarded, application requests, and contact information:

http://www.reeusda.gov/crgam/cfp/community.htm http://www.reeusda.gov/1700/funding/rfacfpcgp.htm

(3) Police Department Grant

Each year, Pittsfield Law Enforcement receives a federal block grant. Because the grant is federally funded, it is not guaranteed and is subject to fluctuation in amount; in 2003, the Police Department received \$20,000. Like the DCD, the Police Department makes a portion of its funding available to community improvement projects in the City. Grant recipients must propose a project that aims to reduce crime- and drug-related problems in the neighborhoods of Pittsfield. To receive grant proposals, the Department holds a public hearing in the beginning of October each year; citizen and citizen groups

should come to this meeting prepared to describe and defend their project. Watch the Berkshire Eagle for advertisements of the public hearing.

For more information, contact:

Michelle Kady, Assistant to the Chief of Police

Phone: 413.449.9717

(4) Local Lenders

Local banks and credit unions may also be willing to provide loans and/or grants to community garden organizers.

(5) Fundraising and Private Donations

In the Green Thumbs' earlier effort to create a community garden in the West Side, a substantial portion of their funds came from private donations and fundraising. Hold bake sales, car washes, concerts... Get creative!

Gardening Supplies

(1) National Gardening Association: Youth Garden Grants

Each year, schools and organizations with a youth-centered gardening program receive seeds, tools, garden products, and educational resources donated by companies in the lawn and garden industry. Applications for the Youth Garden Grants and lists of past projects and sponsors are available on the National Gardening Association website:

http://www.kidsgardening.com/grants.asp#ygg

(2) National Gardening Association: Healthy Sprouts Award

The National Gardening Association and Gardener's Supply Company have partnered to support schools and community organizations that use gardens to teach about nutrition and hunger issues in the United States. Twenty-five programs receive an award package of seeds, tools, garden products, and educational resources for growing a vegetable garden. Five of these programs also receive \$500 cash and a \$200 gift certificate to the Gardener's Supply Company catalog. Winning projects demonstrate a relationship between the garden and hunger awareness/nutrition education, and at least

10% of food produced in the garden should be donated to those in need. An application is available on the National Gardening Association website:

http://www.kidsgardening.com/grants.asp#ygg

(3) America the Beautiful Fund: Operation Green Plant

America the Beautiful is a non-profit group that receives large seed donations from major seed companies such as Park, and Thompson and Morgan. Through its Operation Green Plant, America the Beautiful supplies seeds to community and school garden projects nationwide. Sets of 50 mixed packets of seeds, including vegetables, flowers, and herbs are available for the cost of postage and handling. Applications should emphasize the community involvement and volunteer labor aspects of gardening.

An application can be found at the America the Beautiful website:

www.freeseeds.us [click "Order Seeds"]

(4) Seeds of Change: Seed Donation Program

Seeds of Change makes donations of high-quality organic seeds to non-profit organizations dedicated to sustainability and education through organic gardening projects. Details and an application can be found at the Seeds of Change website:

http://www.seedsofchange.com/donations/default.asp?UID=2003111713123131

(5) Miscellaneous Purchasing Options and Potential Donors

Gardening supplies can be purchased at local garden and outdoor equipment stores, in addition to through many online venues. In researching the costs of various supplies, we found the following online vendors extremely helpful:

Dans Garden Shop. http://www.dansgardenshop.com
Fences4Less. http://fences4less.com
Gardener's Supply Company. http://www.garden-shops.com
Garden-Shops.com. http://www.gemplers.com
Outdoor Decor. http://www.outdoordecor.com

Local businesses may also be willing to donate materials for community gardening projects. We encourage garden organizers to contact the following retailers for possible donations of tools and plants:

Wal-Mart

555 Hubbard Ave, Pittsfield, MA

Phone: 413.442.2241

Agway

537 Dalton Ave, Pittsfield, MA

Phone: 413.443.9115

THE COST OF COMMUNITY GREENING

Tables 3 and 4 approximate the costs involved in creating a community garden—the first on non-floodplain property, the second within a floodplain. These projected costs are largely based on the Green Thumbs' plan for the creation of a garden at 78 John Street. When viewing these numbers, it is important to keep in mind that the John Street lot is approximately 10,000 square feet in size, and that the costs involved in developing a smaller lot may be lower. While our estimations are not exact or complete, they will give garden organizers an idea of how much money to request in grant applications to the DCD and other potential funding sources.

Table 3. Projected Garden Costs: Non-Floodplain Property

Item	Cost	Quantity	Total Cost
Permits			
Building Inspection Office – Permit (for fence)	\$10.00		\$10.00
Zoning Board of Appeals – Special Permit (for extending fence into front yard)	200.00		200.00
Soil Testing Contamination testing (Spectrum Application)			
Contamination testing (Spectrum Analytical)	60.00	2	120.00
PCBs	60.00	2	120.00
Lead	15.00	2	30.00
Raised Beds			
Soil replacement	0.00?		0.00?
Recycled timber for raised beds	4,000.00		4,000.00

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⁸⁸ All of this information was generously provided by Fran King in emails throughout late November and early December, 2003.

Materials			
Fence (5 feet tall chain-link)	1,800.00		1,800.00
Composting Unit	100.00	1	100.00
Benches	600.00	2	1,200.00
Seeds	\$0 (free)		0.00
Garden Tools			
Shovel	30.00	2	60.00
Hoe	25.00	2	50.00
Hand Tools (fork, trowel, etc.)	5.00	10	50.00
Wheelbarrow	150.00	1	150.00
Water System ⁸⁹			
Water Hook-up	3,500		3,500
Irrigation System	?		?
TOTAL PROJECTED COST			\$11,270+

 Table 4. Projected Garden Costs: Floodplain Property

Item	Cost	Quantity	Total Cost
Permits			
Building Inspection Office – Permit (for fence)	\$10.00		\$10.00
Zoning Board of Appeals – Special Permit (for	200.00		200.00
extending fence into front yard)			
Conservation Commission – Notice of Intent	106.00		106.00
Soil Testing			
Contamination testing (Spectrum Analytical)			
PCBs	60.00	2	120.00
Lead	15.00	2	30.00
Raised Beds			
Disposal of contaminated soil			
PCB contaminated soil (3 tons)	900.00		900.00
Lead contaminated soil (3 tons) 90	750.00		750.00
Soil replacement	0.00?		0.00?
Recycled timber for raised beds	4,000.00		4,000.00

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⁸⁹ In researching garden planning, we were unable to ascertain monetary figures for the costs of establishing a water system for a community garden. These costs are highly variable and dependent on (1) the location of an individual site and (2) the chosen mode of irrigation.

the location of an individual site and (2) the chosen mode of irrigation.

This figure of 3 tons is a team estimate of the amount of soil likely to be used—and thus removed from a floodplain property—in a raised bed scenario. It is *not* a figure based on professional opinion, and may be imprecise. Additionally, in Table 4 we have only accounted for the removal of lead-contaminated material in our total, given that PCB contamination is far less likely. Planners should be aware, however, that the presence of PCBs will pose an additional removal cost.

Materials			
Fence (5 feet tall chain-link)	1,800.00		1,800.00
Composting Unit	100.00	1	100.00
Benches	600.00	2	1,200.00
Seeds	\$0 (free)		0.00
Garden Tools			
Shovel	30.00	2	60.00
Ное	25.00	2	50.00
Hand Tools (fork, trowel, etc.)	5.00	10	50.00
Wheelbarrow	150.00	1	150.00
Water System			
Water Hook-up	3,500		3,500
Irrigation System	?		?
TOTAL PROJECTED COST			12,126.00+

FOR MORE INFORMATION: RESOURCE LIST

The following resource list is intended to help community garden planners pursue information on garden organization that we could not include in our report. Good luck!

Web Resources

(1) **Capitol District Community Gardens** is a non-profit organization helping residents of Albany, Rensselaer, and Schenectady Counties in New York improve their neighborhoods through community gardening and urban greening programs.

http://www.cdcg.org/index.html

(2) The **American Community Gardening Association** (ACGA) provides a huge number of resources for gardeners, including training for community gardening organizations and links to websites of established urban gardens.

http://www.communitygarden.org/index.html

(3) The **Urban-Community Gardens page at Mindspring** has detailed information sections on funding, community gardening organizations, and related publications.

http://www.mindspring.com/~communitygardens/orgs.html

(4) The University of California Cooperative Extension **Community Garden Start-Up Guide** is a highly detailed and useful step-by-step guide for starting a community garden.

http://celosangeles.ucdavis.edu/garden/articles/startup_guide.html

(5) The New York City **Green Guerillas** provide an array of support services to community gardening groups in NYC.

http://www.greenguerillas.org/

Print Resources

(1) Hynes, H. Patricia. <u>A Patch of Eden: America's Inner City Gardeners</u>. White River Junction: Chelsea Green Publishing Company, 1996. 208 pp.

Stories of successful, real life, inner-city garden projects in the formidable big city environments of New York, Philadelphia, Chicago and San Francisco.

(2) <u>Urban Gardening Program: The Coordinators Book</u>. The Pennsylvania State University/Cooperative Extension Service, 1990. 45 pp.

A complete guide to beginning a community gardening project. Includes guidance on selecting a garden site, water systems, organizing community meetings, dealing with garden pests—and more!

(3) Jeanette Abi-Nader, Kendall Dunnigan, Kristen Markley and David Buckley. Growing Communities Curriculum: Community Building and Organizational Development through Community Gardening.

This 300-page curriculum provides an in depth exploration of the practices and strategies community organizers can use to develop dynamic leaders and create strong programs using a participatory approach to community building. It can be ordered through the ACGA website: http://www.communitygarden.org/pubs/

(4) Joseph Kiefer and Martin Kemple. <u>Digging Deeper: Integrating Youth Gardens Into Schools & Communities</u>. Food Works: Common Roots Press, 1998.

Provides educators with practical ideas for teaching young people through gardening in their schools and communities.

VII. SITE EVALUATION IN THE FIRST PROJECT AREA

In addition to developing a template for community garden creation in the West Side, we evaluated a number of specific properties in the First Project Area for their suitability as future garden sites. Initially, Robert Cornwell of the DCD furnished us with maps and a walking tour of the neighborhood, indicating the fourteen vacant lots to be considered as garden sites. The next step, for us, was to narrow those fourteen sites to a more tractable number. After measuring the heights of trees and buildings on the border of each site, we calculated the number of sunlight hours received on each site in May and September—the beginning and end off the New England growing season, respectively (see Appendix IV). We also took into account the position of each lot in relation to major roads and its proximity to undesirable neighbors. Through this process, we disqualified nine of the fourteen original lots, then focusing our analysis on the five remaining lots.

There were two distinct layers to our final site evaluation. The first layer, a comparative analysis, ranked each site based on its physical qualities, location within the First Project Area, and infrastructural readiness for a garden. The second layer used the same data to project the cost for garden development in each of the five sites.

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

Analysis Criteria

In evaluating the five remaining lots in the First Project Area, we assigned each a 1-5 ranking within six categories of criteria. In our ranking system, the number 1 represented the most favorable score and 5 the least favorable. Our analysis criteria were: (1) Existing Fencing, (2) Visibility, (3) Surroundings, (4) Debris Meter, (5) Flatness, and (6) Size.

(1) Existing Fencing

As indicated in the previous sections on zoning and garden costs, the encircling of a garden with a simple chain-link fence can be an expensive and complicated process! We have thus considered it to a particular site's advantage if is surrounded, or partly surrounded, by existing fencing. Choosing a pre-fenced lot for a garden will save organizers a number of costs, in both money and time expenditure.

(2) Visibility

In order to serve the end of neighborhood beautification, a garden should be as visible as possible. We have thus awarded more favorable rankings to lots on major roads and/or near community gathering spaces, where they will be seen.

(3) Surroundings

A community garden should be located in a space that is appealing, and certainly not endangering or off-putting, to the people participating in it. In this category, lots with safe, pleasant surroundings received more favorable rankings than those with unpleasant surroundings—ferocious dogs or vacant houses reputed to attract drug activity, for example.

(4) Debris Meter

Our so-called "Debris Meter" is a measure of the anticipated effort required to develop a site for a garden. It accounts for, in effect, the amount of debris—garbage, old brick foundations, brush piles—on a lot that would have to be cleaned up and disposed of before a garden plan could proceed there.

(5) Flatness

Setting up garden plots requires the least amount of effort and resource expenditure on flat plots of land. Our flatness category thus awards a more favorable ranking to those sites with flat land, and less favorable rankings to those with land that slopes and/or contains large holes.

(6) *Size*

The larger the site, the more gardening activity can occur there! This category thus ranks lots by size, granting the most favorable ranking to the largest site and the least favorable to the smallest.

Site Analysis

The five lots included in our final site analysis were 178 Robbins Ave., 249 and 251 Bradford Ave., 282 Bradford Ave., 199 Dewey Ave., and 159 Linden Ave. These lots were selected because of the plentiful sunlight they will receive throughout the growing season and because the city plans to acquire them through tax-title.

178 Robbins

The lot at 178 Robbins Ave. is partially fenced with a chain-link fence. While the location of the site would not be very visible for individuals just passing through the neighborhood, it is situated next to Tucker Playground and across from the Christian Center. Its proximity to significant places within the First Project Area makes it a visible location within the neighborhood.



Preparing 178 Robbins Ave. for a garden would probably entail a significant amount of work. There is quite a bit of trash and debris, ranging from plastic bottles to broken glass to piles of wood. Additionally, the lot is above street level and has an



uneven landscape with large holes that would need to be filled in.

Located between a multifamily housing unit and the park, the lot's surroundings do not present apparent drawbacks—though, on the other hand, provide no clear benefit. At 8,712 square feet, 178 Robbins Ave. is the second largest lot in our survey.

249/251 Bradford

The lot at 249/251 Bradford Ave. also is fenced part way around the lot, though the fence separating it from the abutting property appears to be in need of repair. This site

is not likely to be seen by people outside of the neighborhood. It is, however, on a street corner (Bradford and Robbins) and therefore might receive more traffic than otherwise.

The site preparation costs here would likely be substantial due to the condition of the property and its slope.

On this site there is trash and low brush that would need to be cleared as well as



an old, brick foundation that has become uncovered. Additionally, because of the slope of the site an area would need to be leveled for gardening. Next door is a vacant home that is severely deteriorated. The presence of an abandoned home adjacent to the property might make it an unattractive location for a garden, especially if the conditions of the building continue to deteriorate. At 5,564 square feet, 249/251 Bradford Ave. was also the second smallest site we analyzed.

282 Bradford



Two sides of the site at 282 Bradford are fenced already with chain-link fencing. The location of the site is not a very prominent place in the neighborhood, for either people passing though or residents. Site preparation would be fairly easy as the majority of the site is level and clear of debris. There is,

however, debris along the edge of the property including household trash and an old trailer. The surrounding properties are both vacant. One is an empty lot that is used for parking, the other a vacant building. Unfortunately, gardening next to a parking area may not be the most enjoyable endeavor. Additionally, this site was the smallest we analyzed, 5,214 square feet.

199 Dewey

Located Along the west branch of the Housatonic River, 199 Dewey Ave. has the benefit of being entirely fenced. Dewey Ave., however, was probably one of the least



trafficked streets in our study area; the site is not in a very visible location. Site preparation would likely be minimal due to the cleanliness of the property, though there is a slight grade towards the river that might require some consideration before beginning a garden. Part of the reason for the lot's appearance is that it is maintained on a regular basis by abutters. Some of the surrounding

neighbors are involved in its upkeep, making it a potentially welcoming environment for a garden. Its 9,975 square feet also make it the largest lot in our survey, providing the most area in which to garden.

159 Linden

The Linden Avenue site was the final site in our analysis and had no existing fencing of any kind. This site is the most visible of the five as Linden Ave. is a through street from the city's downtown area, carrying a heavier traffic load than other streets in the First



Project Area. This level and debris-free lot will not require much additional work to prepare for gardening. The properties surrounding 159 Linden Ave. could be potential resources for a garden project. The presence of two community centers, Price Memorial Church and the Christian Center, so nearby may be a benefit to the garden as they could assist with organization and involvement. The site's 8,580 square feet make it the third largest site in our analysis.

Table 5 provides the quantitative summary of our site analysis. The lowest total score represents the best site.

Table 5.

Address	Fencing	Visibility	Surroundings	Debris meter	Flatness	Size	Total
199 Dewey	1	4	2	1	3	1	12
159 Linden	5	1	1	2	1	3	13
178 Robbins	2	2	3	5	5	2	19
282 Bradford	3	5	4	3	2	5	22
251/249 Bradford	4	3	5	4	4	4	24

COST ANALYSIS

Table 6 provides a comparative cost analysis for the five lots in the First Project Area being considered as sites for a community garden. As is apparent, fencing and soil removal are the major and most variable costs associated with developing a garden.

Table 6.

Address	Water Hookup	Soil Removal	Fencing	Permitting		Raised Bed	Materials	TOTAL COST
249/251 Bradford	\$3,500	\$0	\$746	\$210	\$0	\$4,000	\$1,610	\$10,066
199 Dewey	\$3,500	\$750	\$0	\$106	\$150	\$4,000	\$1,610	\$10,116
282 Bradford	\$3,500	\$0	\$600	\$210	\$0	\$4,000	\$1,610	\$9,920
159 Linden	\$3,500	\$0	\$1,534	\$210	\$ 0	\$4,000	\$1,610	\$10,854
178 Robbins	\$3,500	\$0	\$794	\$210	\$0	\$4,000	\$1,610	\$10,114

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions

Through our two-layered site evaluation, we found that the financial costs associated with developing a site in the First Project Area are almost directly proportional to the desirability of that site for a garden! In other words, the "best" potential garden sites will be among the most expensive to develop, and the least desirable sites among the least expensive.

The property at 199 Dewey Avenue scored best in our site analysis: it is fenced on all sides, is currently well maintained and free of detritus, and is surrounded by well-reputed residential neighbors. Mainly because it is located in a floodplain, however, the 199 Dewey site is also projected to have the second highest garden creation cost. There is, furthermore, a "hassle" (i.e. time, effort, and potential frustration) cost involved in developing gardens on floodplain property. While this cost was *not* fully accounted for in our analysis, we advise garden organizers to consider it carefully when selecting a lot.

159 Linden, the parcel between the Christian Center and Price Memorial Church, received the second most favorable analysis score and is projected to have the highest cost. The lot at 178 Robbins Street ranked third in both our six-factor analysis and in the

cost projection. Finally, while the two parcels on Bradford Street earned the lowest projected costs, they also received the lowest analysis scores.

Recommendations

Considering the findings presented in our Conclusions section and elsewhere in the report, we would like to make the following recommendations:

1. Parcel Choice in First Project Area

We recommend, first, the development of a community garden on 199 Dewey Avenue, 159 Linden Street, and/or 178 Robbins Street. In choosing between these sites, we advise garden organizers to consider the various costs (financial, material and temporal) involved in developing each, and to make a decision based on the resources most available to them. Since 199 Dewey, 159 Linden, and 178 Robbins are city-owned or will be owned by the city in the near future, prospective gardeners will need to acquire these parcels from the city.

2. Development of Privately-Owned Parcels

In terms of site options, there is a second possibility for garden development with perhaps more immediate potential. Because there are no zoning restrictions on gardens, they may be developed on any property with a consenting owner. We therefore encourage private owners of vacant parcels to consider establishing community gardens on their land. This option may be particularly successful in the case of churches with adjacent undeveloped parcels, as a church community is a pre-existing group with sufficient organization and solidarity to form a successful gardening cooperative.

3. *Garden Leadership*

Garden development requires a committed group of gardeners and organizers. Toward this end, we recommend that any gardening project be led by a pre-existing or newly formed group. Possible pre-existing groups include neighborhood churches and the West Side Green Thumbs. New organizations can also be formed of interested

citizens, preferably with the leadership of a Master Gardener or someone with comparable gardening experience.

4. Consultation of Abutters

We also recommend that before planning a garden, organizers consult abutters to establish their preferences. While most of the West Side residents with whom we spoke favor having community gardens in their neighborhoods, some individuals may not welcome gardening—and the activity and landscape alteration it entails—in an adjacent lot. As community gardening is, after all, about community, it would be unfortunate to create neighborhood conflict with such a well intentioned project!

5. Formation of City-Community Partnership

Because many residents of the West Side are eager for positive change and an indication of City commitment to their neighborhoods, we recommend that garden groups consider seeking partnership with a city department, like that of Parks and Recreation or Community Development. Such a partnership will help to streamline the process of applying for various permits and exemptions, and will also reduce the cost of such applications, as city departments are waived city fees.

6. Keeping it Simple

As the example of the Green Thumbs demonstrates, developing a garden can be complicated—and prolonged—through applications for special permits and exemptions. We encourage future gardeners to choose garden sites carefully, and to avoid applications for special permits and exemptions when possible. Especially serious consideration should be given to properties in a floodplain, as the preparation of a successful Notice of Intent is a time-consuming, absorbing, and potentially costly process.

7. Keeping Heart

Lastly, we recognize that garden planning can be a long, involving process with often unforeseen complications! We urge garden organizers to remain patient and

hopeful throughout this process. It is our belief that if garden planners keep heart and persist, they will eventually succeed in transforming their neighborhoods.

IX. APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: THE BENEFITS OF URBAN COMMUNITY GARDENING

As the United States becomes an increasingly urban nation, growing numbers of city communities are embracing gardens as a means of promoting individual health, neighborhood beautification, civic pride and participation, local food security, strengthened communal bonds, and crime reduction. Developing alongside the trend toward urban gardens is a substantial body of literature on their benefits, in addition to an emerging scientific interest in the effects of gardens on urban communities.

Individual Benefits

Recent research on "people-plant interactions" indicates that people benefit from exposure to living green spaces, like gardens, forests and grass lawns. A number of theories have attempted to explain the underlying reasons for individuals' positive responses to plants. Edward O. Wilson and Stephen Kellert's "Biophilia Hypothesis" postulates that an evolutionary history of proximity to the land—challenged only in the last two centuries, with the rise of cities and a global economy—has made contact with nature a necessity for human health. ⁹¹ Taking a more synchronistic perspective, Ulrich and Parsons of Texas A&M posit that the overwhelming chaos and "visual complexity" of modern life predisposes people to relish the quiet they find in green spaces. ⁹²

However speculative the background theories, the psychological benefits of "greening" human environments are soundly demonstrated. Research by Ulrich recorded that in simply looking at plants, individuals experience diminished levels of stress, fear, anger, and muscle tension. Other studies have found that prison inmates with windows overlooking greenery demand less medical care and report fewer symptoms of stress. A 1988 Gallup public opinion survey for the National Gardening Association suggests that

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⁹¹ The Biophilia Hypothesis. Ed. Kellert and Wilson. Washington, D.C.: Island Press, 1993.

⁹² Malakoff, David. "What Good is Community Greening?" American Community Gardening Association. http://www.communitygarden.org/pubs/whatgood.html. Visited 18 October 2003.

people recognize these psychological benefits; 88% of those surveyed asserted that trees and flowers were important to humans "beyond their beauty of pleasing appearance." ⁹³

In a participatory green space like a community garden, another layer of benefits is added to those of simple passive exposure to "greening." Urban gardens in particular can provide low-income, high-risk individuals with an opportunity for success and a feeling of effectiveness. Nourishing life from the soil helps to build self-esteem and a sense of accomplishment, control and responsibility. Finally, gardening is good exercise! In a predominantly sedentary culture with growing incidences of weight-related health problems, residents of US cities can only benefit from the opportunity—and the incentive—to be physically active.

Community Benefits

While the individual benefits of urban gardening are real and significant, it is the *community* benefits that are of greater interest to city planners and politicians, and it is through consideration of the latter type that planning decisions will tend to be made. As with the West Side Initiative, community gardens are often used as a strategy of urban revitalization projects. It is thus crucial to evaluate gardens for their role in community building and development. In the past, community gardens have been disadvantaged in planning assessments because many of their benefits—in both personal and community health—cannot be readily described in empirical or monetary terms. Nevertheless, gardens deliver many intangible values that should be accounted for in an expansive appraisal of urban development options.

The most obvious and monetizable of these values is a garden's enhancement of its physical environment. Urban gardens gained conceptual popularity in the 1890s with the City Beautiful movement, when the hundreds of acres of vacant lots strewn across the country came to be viewed as "civic blemishes" demanding aesthetic re-creation. The need persists now, a full century later. According to a 1998 survey, approximately twenty-three percent of the land in the average American city is vacant. The reality of "urban blight" is even more pronounced in Pittsfield's First Project Area, where thirty-

⁹³ Ibid

⁹⁴ Schukoske, Jane. "Community Development Through Gardening: State and Local Policies Transforming Urban Open Space." http://www.nyu.edu/pubs/jlpp/articles/vol3num2/schukoske.pdf. Visited 24.10.03.

four percent of neighborhood parcels comprise vacant lots or buildings. Today's urban gardens transform abandoned, littered lots into attractive spaces with a social function. Together with improvements to the physical environment itself (plants serve to clean the air, and well-composted gardens improve soil quality), gardens enhance people's *perceptions* of their physical environment. In enriching the image of a community, greening activities encourage a sense of pride among residents and appreciation among outsiders who pass through or visit the area. By making neighborhoods more pleasant places to inhabit, urban gardens also increase property values.

Community gardens strengthen the social cohesion of neighborhoods. In an age when people are no longer bound to their home neighborhood through commercial activity, gardens serve to create shared bonds between neighbors through "hard work, realized interdependence, and cooperation." Community gardens create opportunities for people to work and socialize together, breaking the isolation that characterizes many modern neighborhoods. A study at Rutgers University found that the development of a garden increases trust and interaction between neighbors, even outside of the growing season. This feeling of connection and belonging can extend beyond social interaction into social service; a study of the Philadelphia Urban Gardening Program found that community gardeners are more likely than non-gardeners to participate in other civic events, like food distribution and neighborhood cleanups. 97

Another possible product of urban gardening is its empowerment of otherwise politically marginal individuals. Researcher Marti Ross Bjornson titles this process "greenlining"—a term intended to contrast with "redlining," the common denial of banking and insurance services to low-income neighborhoods. After studying community gardening projects in Chicago, Bjornson concluded that involvement in a garden can expose ordinarily uninvolved citizens to business and government leadership. Attending a community meeting on a garden project, for example, might introduce individuals to non-profit and government officials they would not have met through other

⁹⁵ Williamson, Erin A. "A Deeper Ecology: Community Gardens in the Urban Environment." http://www.cityfarmer.org/AP-city_farmer.doc. Visited 10.18.03.

⁹⁶ Ohio State University Extension's Urban Gardening Program in Cuyahoga County. "Seeds of Hope... Harvest of Pride! What are the Benefits of Community Gardening?" http://www.brightdsl.net/~cuyahoga/benefits.html#Topic%201. Visited 10.18.03.

97 Ibid.

channels. Through these encounters, citizens learn how to access the political process—and, crucially, officials gain a perspective into neighborhood character and needs.⁹⁸

Many advocates of urban gardening promote it as an instrument of crime reduction. A 1993 study for the Merck Family Fund reported that after the creation of a community gardening program in one Philadelphia neighborhood, burglaries and thefts in the area dropped from 40 incidents per month to four. Similarly, the Trust for Public Land reported a 28 percent drop in crime after the first year of a garden project in the Mission District of San Francisco. In the view of the Trust: "Working on the garden encouraged residents to form a neighborhood watch group, which made the area an unattractive place for drug dealers." Increased neighborhood cohesion and pride strengthens residents' protectiveness of their shared property—and of each other. A second explanation of relationship between gardens and diminished crime is that gardening provides at-risk youth with constructive activity, offering a concrete alternative to crime.

Gardens are a promising venue for the preservation, celebration, and sharing of cultural heritage. Immigrants and ethnic minorities in the United States are often unable to purchase native foods at local supermarkets, and in community gardens have the opportunity to grow food from their homeland and share it with others. Finally, gardens create opportunities for collaboration across racial and generational lines, fostering bonds of understanding between groups who may not otherwise interact.

Food Security and Ecological Literacy

Many corporate grocery stores have moved out of urban areas, leaving fast food restaurants and convenient stores as the only source of food for low-income, inner city residents lacking their own cars. The low availability of fresh produce at these venues has resulted in a diet high in processed foods, and deficient in fruits and vegetables, for many Americans. In this situation, urban gardens may become a family's most reliable

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Malakoff, David. "What Good is Community Greening?" American Community Gardening
 Association. http://www.communitygarden.org/pubs/whatgood.html. Visited 10.18.03.
 Ohio State University Extension's Urban Gardening Program in Cuyahoga County. "Seeds of Hope...

⁹⁹ Ohio State University Extension's Urban Gardening Program in Cuyahoga County. "Seeds of Hope... Harvest of Pride! What are the Benefits of Community Gardening?" http://www.brightdsl.net/~cuyahoga/benefits.html#Topic%201. Visited 10.18.03.

source of fresh, nutritious produce—at least during the growing season. One study suggested that gardening can improve nutritional intake even beyond an increased consumption of vegetables; gardeners in the Philadelphia Urban Gardening program were found to consume not only more vegetables, but also fewer sweets than controls.

While the diets of low-income groups are determined, in part, by affordability, they are also dictated by convenience. Many individuals without cars or access to adequate public transportation pay relatively high prices for groceries at the expensive convenient store, simply because it is the only option. In situations like this, community gardens can actually result in financial savings. A 1992 study by Kansas State University of 361 community gardeners found that 48 percent of the unemployed people surveyed reported savings of at least \$150. Nationally, the USDA estimated that urban gardeners involved in its programs grew \$16 million worth of fresh food in 1993. 102

Beyond the provision of communities with nutritious, relatively inexpensive produce, urban gardens serve as a vital point of relation between people and the living environment that—while so often out of sight—nourishes them. By the year 2025, it is estimated that 80% of the US population will live in urban areas. It is easy for people inhabiting urban settings to lose their sense of connection with and dependence on the natural world. This is particularly true in relation to food systems. As global agriculture simultaneously liberalizes and corporatizes, food production is concentrated on everswelling farms far removed from the daily travel routes of American city-dwellers. The food grown on these farms passes through a number of intermediaries—processors, packagers, distributors and retailers—before finally reaching the consumer, creating a distance between seed and table without historical precedent. In 1960, the average distance that food traveled from the soil to our plates was 265 miles. In 2002 this distance had increased to an average of 1,500 miles.

Williamson, Erin A. "A Deeper Ecology: Community Gardens in the Urban Environment." http://www.cityfarmer.org/AP-city_farmer.doc. Visited 10.18.03.

Ohio State University Extension's Urban Gardening Program in Cuyahoga County. "Seeds of Hope... Harvest of Pride! What are the Benefits of Community Gardening?" http://www.brightdsl.net/~cuyahoga/benefits.html#Topic%201. Visited 10.18.03.

Ohio State University Extension's Urban Gardening Program in Cuyahoga County. "Seeds of Hope... Harvest of Pride! What are the Benefits of Community Gardening?" http://www.brightdsl.net/~cuyahoga/benefits.html#Topic%201. Visited 10.18.03.

Williamson, Erin A. "A Deeper Ecology: Community Gardens in the Urban Environment." http://www.cityfarmer.org/AP-city_farmer.doc. Visited 10.18.03.

The consequences of this distancing are real and severe: many American youth are not aware of the origins of their food. A recent survey of urban youth by the California Foundation for Agriculture in the Classroom found that more than 60% of young people believed that cotton comes from sheep, and vegetables from "the store." ¹⁰⁴

Without an understanding of the ecological conditions in which food is produced, individuals cannot be expected to make informed or prudent decisions vis-à-vis the global food system, often at the expense of personal health and the world environment.

Growing vegetables in neighborhood gardens can address this dangerous disconnect between people and the processes that yield the food on which they depend. In addition to reducing the costs (in fossil fuel expenditure, packaging, refrigeration, etc.) of conventional food transport, local food systems can build ecological literacy by inspiring in its participants an informed perspective into the global economy—and ecology—of food. It is this perspective, or better yet, *consciousness*, that may be considered the seed of wise and sustainable consumer behavior.

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¹⁰⁴ University of California Cooperative Extension. "Community Garden Start-Up Guide." http://celosangeles.ucdavis.edu/garden/articles/startup_guide.html. Visited 10.24.03.

APPENDIX 2: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Introduction

[basic points]

My name is Briana/Nick/Tisha. I'm a student at Williams College taking a class on environmental planning, which requires students to serve as consultants on a community development project in the Berkshires. My team is working with Bob Cornwell of the Community Development Office on planning community gardens for the West Side Initiative, particularly for the First Project Area...

Do you mind if I record this conversation? Would you object to being quoted in our report? This interview may be used confidentially, if you prefer.

For 'Big Picture' Officials

- 1. How did the West Side Initiative evolve? What are its goals? Why was the West Side chosen as the target neighborhood over other areas in Pittsfield? What is your role/capacity/involvement in the West Side Initiative?
- 2. Who created the steering committee? What are the criteria that individuals must meet to serve on this committee? Are they elected, appointed or do they volunteer? What percentage do West Side residents constitute on the steering committee? How is authority distributed?
- 3. Do you think the West Side Initiative can achieve its goals of urban regeneration? Could you describe a general timeline for attaining the objectives of the West Side Initiative? What is the next step?
- 4. In your opinion are there any limitations to the WSI? Have you heard any other criticisms?
- 5. Could you tell us why the previous community garden project was unsuccessful? How was this failure received by the West Side neighborhood? What lessons can we take from this?
- 6. What role would the community garden play in meeting the goals of the WSI? What do you think are the most important factors to consider when developing a community garden?

For members of the Beautification Sub-Committee

- 1. What is your place in / relationship to the community?
- 2. In your opinion, does the community need a garden?
- 3. Who would use a garden?
- 4. In your opinion, how would a garden benefit the community? How will a garden meet the needs of the community? Are there other needs that are complemented by the development of a garden? How would you rank the need for a community garden in comparison with other needs in the community?
- 5. What type of garden would you like to see in the community? (Vegetable? Flower?)
- 6. What is your vision for community participation in and management of the garden? (Will the garden be shared or divided into individual / familial plots? Will there be a special section for young people? Who will be in charge? Who will write and enforce garden rules?)
- 7. What other community needs should the garden serve? (Gathering space? Constructive activity for neighborhood youth? Food production?)
- 8. What factors are important to consider in siting the garden? (Safe accessibility and seclusion vs. visibility from major roads.)
- 9. What obstacles do you foresee in the process of planning a garden?
- 10. What issues of food security are there in the community? (We mean: Is there hunger in this community? Do residents have access to nutritious, affordable food on a regular basis? Where do community members purchase food?)

Conclusion

Thank you.

Is there anything else you would like to add?

Who else should I speak with about this?

Our findings will be synthesized in a report; would you like a copy?

APPENDIX 3: SURVEY

Pittsfield West Side - Resident Survey

We are students working with the West Side Steering Committee on the part of the West Side Initiative dealing with community gardens. Our role is to help assess the possibility of a community garden in your neighborhood. If you live in the West Side, we would greatly appreciate your input — we can't do this without you!

Before you start, here's some background on what community gardening is about.

A **community garden** is a garden shared by members of a community. Community gardens are usually divided into sections, and each section belongs to an individual or family for the growing season (May-September). Everyone with their own section of the garden is responsible for planting and tending it, and gets to eat the vegetables it produces!

1.		The West Side has many vacant lots that the city would like to redevelop. Please rank these possibilities in order of preference (1-6, where 1 = your top choice and 6 = your last choice) for a vacant lot in your neighborhood:				
		Parking Lot Community Garden Youth Center Housing Park or Playground Other (please specify)				
Plea	se explain your first cho	ice:				
2.	Would you like a com	nmunity garden in your neighborhood? No				
	If no, why not? (optic	onal)				
3.	check all that apply.)	you like a garden in your neighborhood to have? (Please es Fruit Sitting area				
4.	Would you mind if th across the street from Yes					

	If yes, why? (optional)					
5.	a) If there were a community garden in your neparticipate? Yes No	eighborhood, would you				
	b) If you have children 12 years old and under, would they participate? Yes No Don't known.					
	c) If you have children between the ages of 13 and 18, would they participate? Yes No Don't kn					
6.	If your neighborhood decided to have a garden managing and planning it? Yes No	, would you be interested in				
7.	How many hours per week would you or your family members be able to work in a garden? (The greatest time commitment would be during the growing season, May-September.) 01-2 More than 4					
8.	Do you have any other comments on a comments	munity garden?				
9.	a) Do you live in the West Side? Yes	_ No				
	b) If yes, do you live in the block formed by Linden Street, Dewey Street, Bradford Street, and Robbins Avenue? (Outlined in map) Yes No					
10.	Are you: A homeowner? Renting? Other (please specify)					
11.	Please select your age group: Under 18 18-30 30-65 65 or older	Thank you for all your help!				

APPENDIX 4: DEP REVIEW OF GREEN THUMBS' NOTICE OF INTENT



COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS
EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS
DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

436 Dwight Street • Springfield, Massachusetts 01103 • (413) 784-1100

MITT ROMNEY

ELLEN ROY HERZFELDER Secretary

KERRY HEALEY Lieutenant Governor EDWARD P. KUNCE Acting Commissioner

RE: NOTIFICATION OF WETLANDS PROTECTION ACT FILE NUMBER DATE: June 16, 2003

MUNICIPALITY: PITTSFIELD

The Department of Environmental Protection has received a Notice of Intent filed in accordance with the Wetlands Protection Act (MGL c. 131, § 40):

APPLICANT:

WESTSIDE GREEN THUMBS

OWNER:

CITY OF PITTSFIELD

ADDRESS:

C/O WNRC 314 COLUMBUS AVENUE 70 4

70 ALLEN STREET, ROOM 205

PITTSFIELD, MA 01201

PITTSFIELD, MA 01201

PROJECT LOCATION: 78 JOHN STREET

IF CHECKED, THE FOLLOWING ITEM(S) APPLY TO THIS NOTICE OF INTENT:

A. This project has been assigned the following file #: 263-772

As presented, this project appears to fail General Performance Standards for work within Bordering Land Subject to Flooding [see 3310 CMR 10.57] and as detailed in the numbered comments provided below; supplemental data will be necessary to achieve full compliance with the Regulations. In accordance with 310 CMR 10.05(6)(b, failure to meet General Performance Standards requires that an Order of Conditions "shall prohibit any work or any portion thereof that cannot be conditioned to meet said standards". In order to avoid issuance of a denial Order of Conditions or potential Department intervention (appeal), the applicant should modify the project and/or provide additional information as detailed below. The conservation commission is urged to use the following comments as guidance when assessing the project's compliance with the Regulations; the applicant is urged to provide additional information to the conservation commission and the Department based on these comments, and format their written responses by referencing individual comments by number as assigned below.

Compensatory flood storage has not been provided; please see the Regulations at 310 CMR 10.57 for additional
information. Use of a volume of buildings that were previously demolished does not provide for compensation
of flood storage lost.

Although the project will be within the Riverfront Area, the activities may be exempt as per 310 CMR
10.58(6). Please assess the project for those activities that are exempt; receiving the exemption obliges the
applicant to meet all other General Performance Standards, including those form Bordering Land subject to
Flooding. Activities that are not exempt from 310 CMR 10.58 should be reviewed under the provisions for
Riverfront Redevelopment.

3. Erosion and sediment control should be used during construction.

4. The conservation commission should correctly cite relevant plans in the Order of Conditions.

 Copies of final supplemental information (written and graphic) that is supplemental to and generated during and after the Public Hearing and local review of this project should be forwarded to both the Conservation Commission and the Department's Western Regional Office.

 UPON SUBMISSION OF ADDITIONAL INFORMATION, A RE-CALCULATION OF RESOURCE AREA IMPACTS SHOULD BE PROVIDED.

This information is available in alternate format. Call Aprel McCabe, ADA Coordinator at 1-617-556-1171. TDD Service - 1-800-298-2207.

DEP on the World Wide Web; http://www.mass.gov/dep

Printed on Recycled Paper

ISSUANCE OF A FILE NUMBER INDICATES ONLY COMPLETENESS OF SUBMITTAL, NOT APPROVAL OF APPLICATION

Other Regulatory Jurisdiction:

- C. □ Application has been forwarded to Waterways Regulation Program to determine if a Chapter 91 License is required.
- D.

 401 Water Quality Certification (314 CMR 9.00) may be required. See below for further details:
 - ☑ Based upon the information submitted in and with your Notice of Intent a separate 401 Water Quality Certification application form is not required. Provided that the project meets the following conditions, summarized below from 314 CMR 9.03 and 9.04, and the conditions under the US Army Corps of Engineers Programmatic General Permit for Massachusetts (PGP), the project qualifies for 401 Certification as certified under the PGP:
 - a) Activities are conducted in compliance with MGL c. 131, § 40 (the Wetlands Protection Act) and the Final Order of Conditions permitting the activities does not result in the loss of more than 5,000 square feet cumulatively of bordering and isolated vegetated wetlands and Land Under Water and/or the dredging of more than 100 cubic yards of Land Under Water;
 - The Final Order of Conditions requires at least 1:1 replacement of Bordering Vegetated Wetlands pursuant to 310 CMR 10.55(4)(b);
 - c) The project is not listed in 314 CMR 9.04(1) through (11) including: discharge of dredged or fill material to any Outstanding Resource Waters; any part of a subdivision unless deed restricted, so long as the discharge is not to an Outstanding Resource Water see 314 CMR 9.04(3), and;
 - d) The project does not include activities exempt from MGL c. 131, § 40 (except for normal maintenance and improvement of land in agricultural or aquacultural use); discharge of dredged or fill material to an isolated vegetated wetland designated as rare and endangered species habitat; loss of any salt marsh; activities subject to an individual 404 permit.

Information and a copy of the PGP can be obtained from the US Army Corps of Engineers at 1-800-362-4367. If impacts to resource areas or project size increases beyond that described in the Notice of Intent or there are discrepancies therein, you must notify the Department and request a determination that the criteria of 314 CMR 9.03 have been met before the activity may begin.

- □ Before the activity described in the Notice of Intent can commence, you must obtain a Water Quality Certification from this Regional Office. Please complete the enclosed 401 Water Quality Certification application form and file it with this Regional Office for review. The applicant is advised to forward a copy of the application to the US Army Corps of Engineers for review, at US Army Corps of Engineers, 696 Virginia Road, Concord, MA 01742-2751.
- □ Your project involves dredging of greater than 100 cubic yards of Land Under Water. Please complete the enclosed 401 Water Quality Certification application form and submit to the Department of Environmental Protection, Wetlands and Waterways Program, One Winter Street, Boston, MA 02108. Call the Wetlands and Waterways Program at 1-617-292-5695 with any questions. The applicant is advised to forward a copy of the application to the US Army Corps of Engineers for review, at US Army Corps of Engineers, 696 Virginia Road, Concord, MA 01742-2751.

For more information please contact:

Susan Gillan, Wetlands Program @ 1-413-755-2147

Conservation Commission Property Owner as listed in Notice of Intent Representative as listed in Notice of Intent	☐MA Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program ☐US Army Corps of Engineers ☐DEP-Waterways Regulation Program
LiOther:	
	Property Owner as listed in Notice of Intent

APPENDIX 5: METHOD FOR TREE HEIGHT MEASUREMENT 105

To measure tree heights one can use a clinometer, Abney level, or Haga "altimeter." Using any of these devices, be sure that you are using a %slope, topographic, or tangent scale rather than degrees of slope. The Haga has scales that can be set to the horizontal viewing distance, thereby eliminating the need for multiplication to determine heights.

A. To determine the height of a tree <u>on level ground or if your eye-level is uphill of the</u> tree's base:

- 1. Locate yourself a convenient distance from the tree at a point where you can see both the top and the bottom of the tree.
- 2. Measure the **horizontal** distance (d) from the **center** of the tree to your eye.
- 3. View the top of the tree and record the %slope (s_t) this is a positive number.
- 4. View the bottom of the tree and record the %slope (s_b) this is a negative number.
- 5. Tree height = $(\mathbf{d})\mathbf{x}(\mathbf{s}_t) (\mathbf{d})\mathbf{x}(\mathbf{s}_b)$

NB: you <u>subtract a negative</u> height for the section of the tree that is below eye-level, alternatively you could add the absolute value of $(\mathbf{d})\mathbf{x}(\mathbf{s_b})$ instead.

- **B.** To determine the height of a tree if your eye-level is below the tree's base:
- 1. Locate yourself a convenient distance from the tree at a point where you can see both the top and the bottom of the tree.
- 2. Measure the **horizontal** distance (d) from the **center** of the tree to your eye.
- 3. View the top of the tree and record the %slope (s_t) this is a positive number.
- 4. View the bottom of the tree and record the %slope (s_b) this is a also a positive number since your eye is below the base of the tree.
- 5. Tree height = $(\mathbf{d})\mathbf{x}(\mathbf{s_t}) (\mathbf{d})\mathbf{x}(\mathbf{s_b})$

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 $^{^{\}rm 105}$ Art, Henry provided us with this document.

APPENDIX 6: ATTENDANCE AT PUBLIC PRESENTATION

The following are the names and addresses of the individuals who attended our public presentation on 10 December, titled "West of Eden: Planning Community Gardens for Pittsfield's West Side," at the West Side Neighborhood Resource Center. Everyone present indicated a willingness to have their name and address publicized for the purpose of communication at a later date about garden organization.

Name Mailing Address

Ryan Keiper 72 Main Street, Great Barrington, MA, 01230

Dominick Villane P.O. Box 271, Pittsfield, MA, 01202 Kent Fox P.O. Box 438, Lanesboro, MA, 01237 James Adamson 61 Taylor Street, Pittsfield, MA, 01201 Elijah Parker P.O. Box 797, Pittsfield, MA, 01201 Sara Hathaway 70 Allen Street (City Hall), Pittsfield, MA Wendy Goodwin P.O. Box 897, Lanesboro, MA, 01237 Ken Duncan 26 John Street, Pittsfield, MA, 01201 Irene Frazier 110 Onota Street, Pittsfield, MA, 01201

Mark Amuso 70 Allen Street, Attn: DCD

Carlos Silva SU 1467, Williams College, Williamstown, MA, 01267

Ella Patrick 189 King Street, Pittsfield, MA Jim McCarthy, 32 Pine Knoll Road, Lenox, MA

Master Gardener

Jeanette Alstor 28 McKinley Terrace, Pittsfield, MA

Donald P. Atwater 1531 East Street, Pittsfield

Berkshire Community Action Council

Rhabc P.O. Box 4201, Pittsfield, MA, 01202

X. REFERENCES

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